

MOTOR MOUTH

By
GEORGE FOWLER



FACT FILE

Ford Focus ST three-door.

PRICE (on the road): £17,495. (range rises to £20,095).

ENGINE: 2,522cc, five-cylinder, inline, all-alloy, turbo-charged 20-valve DOHC, with variable cam timing (220bhp, 152lb torque).

TOP SPEED: 150mph; 0-60mph: 6.5secs.

MPG: Urban: 20.5; extra urban: 41.5; combined: 30.4.

CO₂: 224g/km.

INS GROUP: 17.

Net a bargain

■ CLEARLY the new Focus ST is fantastic value, but even so there are stacks of websites offering bargain price cars. So how cheaply can you really get a Focus ST? Rather than trawl through it all I cheated and went straight to www.honestjohn.co.uk because he'll do all the work for you.

■ Sure enough, I immediately latched on to these bargains at www.buymynewcar.co.uk. They've got savings from £2,595 on a three-door ST at £14,899 through to £2,995 on a five-door ST 3 at £17,099, on the road.

■ A few days later Honest's site was showing even bigger bargains. A three-door ST at www.ukcarbroker.co.uk was yours for an amazing £14,098 (saving £3,397) with the entire range rising to just £16,152 for a five-door ST 3, which is an incredible saving of £3,943. Cheers, Honest.



Z4 gets an M for mental

WOULD you pay an extra 10 grand for 0.9 secs shaved off your 0-62 mph time?

No, I didn't think you would. However, for the must-haves of this world, money is fairly meaningless when it comes to cars like the new BMW Z4 M Roadster (above left).

Personally, I'd be more than ecstatic to own a £22,000, 2.0-litre Z4. It's a sweet little motor. A mere £32,000 gets the current top-of-the-range - the 3.0i SE - which is a stormer. Its gorgeous 231 bhp straight-six takes it from 0-62 mph (0-100 kph) in just 5.9 secs and on to a limited 155 mph.

Furious

However, when this beast arrives, around next May, there'll be an outrageous 336 horses pawing around under the bonnet for my guess-timate of £42,000, which is yet another £10,000.

You get the same limited 155 mph, while 0-62 mph falls to 5.0 secs. In mid-range, though, it will be furious. BMW, alarmingly, churn out the tired, much-used and ancient expression that "the new M Roadster is set to rewrite the rule book for performance and agility".

Now where did I put that rule book?

Corolla coaster!

THIS little baby went on sale last Tuesday, and I wouldn't be surprised if you couldn't get your hands on one by next Tuesday.

It's the Toyota Corolla Compressor, which is basically a supercharged version of the current £16,000 T-Sport.

Power is up from 189 to 215 bhp, top speed is up from 140 to 143 mph and acceleration improves dramatically with 0-62

mph in 6.9 secs against the T-Sport's 8.4 figure. The £19,995 price-tag sounds expensive, but you also get stiffened and lowered suspension, smart million-spoke 17-inch alloys, which I'd hate to keep clean, and a neat body kit.

But why will it sell out so quickly?

Because Toyota have only got 250 for sale. Get yours on.



WIN Super set of alloys

FANCY a fantastic set of alloys? Then read on. We've teamed up with top car store Halfords to offer you a massive choice of wheels, worth up to £800, from their specialist modifying branch Ripspeed X.

The first of these sensational stores, at Gateshead, has proved such a hit that another four branches will be opening this month. So if you live anywhere near Sheffield (opening Nov 12), Southampton (Nov 19), Hendon (Nov 26), or Charlton (Nov 27), get down there.

The Ripspeed X experience is much more than just a modifying store. It features Britain's first custom finish dipping service, which is a completely new concept in car modification. It's amazing. Anything from wing

mirrors and dashboards to mobile phone covers, alloys and crash helmets can be "dipped".

Your item is coated in a flawless lacquered finish in a range of effects - carbon fibre, brushed aluminium, wood, chrome or marble - all in a choice of colours. The possibilities are endless to completely customise your car.

You'll also find huge light displays, a giant wall of sound audio display along with exclusive lines of performance parts, styling, and 70 different alloys that you won't find in normal Ripspeed stores. New suppliers include Rial, KEI Racing, DJ, Outlaw, Konig and BK Racing. There's even a SUV

wheel tower, with wheels starting from a massive 20-inches, many of which you can take away on the day.

To win your choice of alloys, simply phone 0905 028 0202 and leave your name and address and the answer to this simple question: Where is the first Ripspeed X store?

Your call will cost just 25p from a BT landline, which is cheaper than a stamp.

Alternatively, text DSMOTOR followed by your answer, name and details to 61616. Texts cost 25p plus your usual network operator rates.

Winners will be chosen by mid-night next Thursday, at random from all entries. Normal Daily Star rules apply.

Good luck folks.



plays fearsome pull. It's so instant you'd never believe it was a turbo, and that's because a huge 237 lbs of torque kicks in from just 1,600 rpm. In mid-range it feels immensely powerful, and it's all mixed with an earthy grunt which gets harsher as it builds up to 7,000 rpm.

It's the total opposite of the smaller engine but more powerful 235bhp 2.0-litre VXR, which prefers to howl and shriek.

On the track, the ST has the edge with its mighty mid-range pull.

On the road, though, where you're a bit more likely to come across hairpins and hilly bends, the honours go to the nimble VXR.

Don't get me wrong, the Focus is still an outrageous handler, but on

some of the roads around Paul Ricard, it got seriously out of shape on twisty surfaces.

The battle between these two cars is going to be monumental over the next couple of years.

The VXR has already won Round One by going on sale in September, four months ahead of the ST.

However, the Focus has come roaring back by starting at a whacking £1,500 less than the VXR.

You won't get leather seats or an MP3 player as you do in the VXR, but you can upgrade to the ST2, (there is no ST1) which has a bargain £1,500-worth of extras for £1,000, including eye-bursting Xenon headlights (£750 extra for Astra), an upgraded eight-speaker

CD and MP3 system and Ford's "quick-clear" heated windscreen.

Another £1,000 gets you the top-of-the-shop ST2, with £1,500-worth of full leather and electric Recaro seats and an even more up-graded stereo.

The ST's interior gets the usual flash-dash treatment.

There's silver-trimmed air-vents and instruments, along with drilled alloy pedals, alloy door-handles, handbrake and gear-knob and bright silver ST kick plates.

The CD-stereo is typical Ford. It's huge, and is surrounded by big buttons, making it easy to use.

The overall ST effect is flash, which is in complete opposition to the ultra-modern digital world of

the VXR, which is far more gracious and laid back. Take your choice: The bistro or the bar?

The standard Focus suspension, already quite brilliant, has been stiffened up, with 30% stronger springs front and rear, an extra cross member to stop the chassis from flexing, upgraded damper and anti-roll bar settings, with bigger front discs to handle the power.

It all sits 15mm (just over half an inch) lower to the ground.

So what's it to be? The ST or the VXR? Both cars are absolutely fantastic. I'd be hugely happy with either of them.

But if I had to make a choice ...

You'll find out soon in my Cars of the Year Awards.

YOU probably noticed that the clocks went back last week, so, here's an appalling and therefore excellent pun from used car history checkers HPI: "Is the right sort of clock going back?" They ask, adding that losing 30,000 miles can earn cheats an average extra £2,250. So how do you spot a clocked car? Look for: shiny steering wheel; worn gear knob and pedal rubbers; poorly aligned mileage digits, worn or collapsing driver's seat; worn carpets (look under mats); tyre wear on "low mileage" new cars (check the spare); excessive front end and door sills stone chips. If you are even slightly suspicious check the car's service history.

MOTORMOUTH EXTRA



OH THEY'RE MUCH TOO DEAR: The Ford Racing Puma, left, Jaguar XJ 220 (above, top) and disastrous City Rover (above) were vastly overpriced and not much fun to be in, either

DAILY STAR READER OFFER

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These cats ain't cool...

PUMA & JAG TOP WORST VALUE LIST

■ by GEORGE FOWLER
QUESTION: What's the worst car I've ever driven? The answer is a doddle.

It's hideous 4x4 the Tata Safari. Thankfully, it's no longer with us, and if you're tempted to buy one second-hand, run a mile.

The second worst car is also easy. It's the doomed City Rover, to be found in a museum near you fairly soon.

These two are rubbish. But believe it or not, you could do worse.

And that's by being ripped-off for paying a disgusting amount of money for a car that you'll soon realise deserves a slot in a skip.

I mean, how would you have felt if you'd fallen for all the Ford hype and actually spent £23,000 on a ten bob Puma called the "Racing" Puma?

That's what 1,000 mugs did six years ago when they bought this "limited edition" model. I'll say it was limited. Limited performance. Limited handling. Limited comfort.

Laugh

Here's what I said at the time: "Is someone at Ford having a laugh? For £23,000 it's a most unpleasant experience."

Well guess what? The current December issue of Test Drive magazine, which went on sale last Thursday, has just picked its top 10 worst-value-for-money cars of all time.

Editor James Mills says: "Used car buyers could sink their money into a genuine howler."

"Wise up, or you might just end up with one of our worst value cars ever."

Here are Test Drive's top 10 rip-offs, and look what's number one. Test Car's comments follow the car's name:

1 Ford Racing Puma: "The racing version did not live up to expecta-



■ TOP Gear magazine readers have voted the Honda S2000 their favourite car for the second year running. A massive 76,050 drivers took part in the survey, which was also good news for Lexus, Skoda, and Subaru, but disastrous for the French, who filled seven of the last 10 places out of 159 cars.

TOP 10

- 1 Honda S2000 (top right)
- 2 Lexus IS200/300
- 3 Lexus RX300
- 4 Skoda Superb
- 5 Skoda Octavia
- 6 Honda Jazz
- 7 Honda Accord
- 8 Subaru Legacy
- 9 Skoda Fabia
- 10 Subaru Forester

BOTTOM 10

- 150 Citroen Xsara
- 151 Peugeot 206
- 152 Renault Megane
- 153 Rover 25
- 154 Fiat Stilo
- 155 Mercedes M-Class
- 156 Renault Laguna
- 157 Renault Espace
- 158 Peugeot 307
- 159 Peugeot 807 (left)

tions and was not powerful enough to justify the hefty price tag."

2 Jaguar XJ220: "The promise of V12 power and four-wheel drive was an empty one. It was a shabby rear-wheel drive V6 for over £400k."

3 VW Porsche 914/6: "You could get a Porsche 911 for just £300 more. The 1969 VW-Porsche bombed."

4 Rover 416 & 45: "Hugely overpriced. Rover slashed the price by a £3,000 during its mid-life facelift."

5 Caterham R500 Evolution: "Over-powered engine is more than you would ever need. You can get a

Caterham which is just as fun to drive for less than half the price."

6 Rover City Rover: "Over-priced, under-developed Indian import."

7 Isuzu Piazza: "Four years old before it reached here. Price quickly dropped dramatically, to no avail."

8 MG SVR: "Why bother? A TVR did a better job for half the price."

9 Rolls-Royce Camargue: "At the time, the most expensive car you could, or rather couldn't, buy."

10 Vauxhall Tigra Diesel: "Feels like a Corsa to sit in and drive. We could forgive it. But we can't."

ORATORIO, the conqueror of Motivator in the Coral-Eclipse at Sandown and the Irish Champion Stakes at Leopardstown, has been retired and joins the Coolmore Stud for next year.

MICHAEL HOURIGAN is unworried over the prospect of testing ground at Down Royal ahead of Beef Or Salmon's bid for back-to-back wins in the James Nicholson Wine Merchant Champion Chase tomorrow.

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simon delamere

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All my starts indicate a fantastic bet today with an absolute beauty set to run a huge race - call now and help me put one over the bookies!

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Call cost £1.50 per min from a BT land line. Goldcall, Alderley Edge, Cheshire, SK9 7JS.

Mike James

Journalist, author and expert on horseracing systems

MORDIN

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RACINGVIEW with ALEX GORRIE

Last Friday: Davenport W6/1

WE HAVE ANOTHER SUPERB GAMBLE THAT WILL BE UNLEASHED TODAY

"This one should be one-way traffic!"

Given within 60 seconds

Daily Hotline

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Call cost £1.50 per min from a BT land line. Goldcall, Alderley Edge, Cheshire, SK9 7JS.

THE SWEENEY

THE CHASER ACE!

The future is looking rosy with some superb flying chasers in store for me to pass on to my callers.

Friday should see us enter a busy weekend with strength.

I've already taken a huge dent out of my Christmas 'five figure' profit target with **Armaturk W3/1**, **Romany Dream W5/2** & **Midnight Gunner W15/2** showing the true value of my unique advice.

GIVE ME JUST ONE WEEK AND YOU'LL SEE MY ABILITY!

I've got Fontwell & Hexham rated and sorted. Lump on - this is candy off a baby!

0906 664 09 92

Call cost £1.50 per min from a BT land line. Goldcall, Alderley Edge, Cheshire, SK9 7JS.

HENRIETTA KNIGHT described it as "the last straw in a trying week" after being fined £1,000 at Towcester yesterday.

The punishment came after Harringay, a 9-4 chance, finished fifth in the two-mile novices' hurdle, beaten 13 and a half lengths.

The stewards ruled the mare had been "tenderly ridden" and fined Knight, as well as suspending Timmy Murphy from November 14-27 - ruling him out of the Hennessy meeting - and banning the horse from running between November 8 to December 17.

It certainly has been a trying week

■ by **TONY LEWIS**

for Hen as the fine comes only two days after her triple Gold Cup winner Best Mate collapsed and died at Exeter.

The day though had started well for the trainer when Harris Bay comfortably won the Novices' Handicap Chase with Murphy in the saddle.

But it went wrong half-an-hour later with Harringay catching the stewards' attention.

The jockey could barely contain his anger at the punishment. Murphy said: "It was unexpected and a bit severe." Miss Knight was not happy either. "This is the first

time this has happened to me and I saw nothing wrong with the ride," she said. "I'm definitely going to take legal advice."

"I am very disappointed. The verdict is harsh," she said. "The horse has a history of wind problems that have been well documented. The stewards knew that."

Red Blazer, one of Knight's favourite horses, will fill the box left empty by Best Mate at her West Lockinge stables. Red Blazer, who Knight saddled to nine successes from 27 starts, was retired after coming home last in a chase at Kempton in February 2003.



UP AND OVER: Harris Bay on way to easy success

HEXHAM ON 09055 141 603 (613)

TRACKFACTS Left-hand undulating track with ten easy fences and six hurdles per circuit, which becomes extremely testing when the going is soft. The long back straight is all downhill with an uphill climb to the finish and a run-in of 250yds.

12.50 CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS' H'CAP CHASE (E) (15 fences) 2m4f/4 (9 runners) £4,385

1 3PPI-ALFIE RICH (27)(CD,F,G,S) M Towner 9 11 12 G Berridge 83
2 02B-ASSUMETHEPOSITION (5)(D,S) R C Guest 5 11 6 J Flavin 10
3 0402-THE MINER (1)(S) Miss S Foster 7 11 2 T Messenger 5
4 0302-RISKY WAY (27)(B,C,F,G) W Collier 9 11 2 J Draper 94
5 3200-DEVONDALE (30)(F) M Murphy 9 10 7 K Mercer 37
6 004P-MOSS BAWN (27)(D,F,S) S Storey 9 10 5 P Kinella 59
7 0616-WULF LORD (20)(B,F,D,G) J Wade 8 10 1 P Aspell 63
8 3010-JUMBO'S DREAM (22)(C,D,F,G,S) P Dixon 14 10 0 D McLean 77
9 402P-PAVEY ARK (27)(D,F) J Moffatt 7 10 0 D Costello 95

LONG HANDICAP: Jumbo's Dream 9-13, Pavey Ark 9-13, Star Betting - 5-4, Alfie Rich, 7-2, Assumetheposition, 4 Risky Way, 10 Wulff Lord, 14 Jumbo's Dream, 20 The Miner, Devonale, 25 others.

2004: Fashions Monty, 8-10-13, (K Mercer), 4-11 F Murphy, 9 ran.

STARFORM: ALFIE RICH Danger: Risky Way

1.20 BARBOUR MAIDEN CHASE (F) (10 fences) 3m1f (8 runners) £3,575

1 0223-CAPPYBARA (23)(S) H Hogarth 7 11 0 D McLean 84
2 13 LORD PAYNE (57)(D) M Towner 7 11 0 K Renwick 28
3 00P-LUCKEN HOVE (181) Miss M Oliver 6 11 0 P Buchanan 33
4 0344-CHIEF DAN GEORGE (12)(D) P Aspell 7 11 0 P Kinella 72
5 0044-SHOW ME THE RIVER (12)(S) F Murphy 6 11 0 B Harding 94
6 0023-WILD ABOUT HARRY (190) A Dixon 8 11 0 K Mercer 32
7 00P-PAVEY ARK (27)(D,F) J Moffatt 7 10 0 D McLean 77
8 0023-PAVEY ARK (27)(D,F) J Moffatt 7 10 0 D McLean 77
9 0023-PAVEY ARK (27)(D,F) J Moffatt 7 10 0 D McLean 77

Star Betting - 5-2, Cappybara, 11-4, Ramsey, 3 Lord Payne, 5 Show Me The River, 7-2, Wild About Harry, 3 Lucken Hove, 15 Ann De, Let's Be Subtle.

2004: Cionn Mhalanua, 6-11-0, (R Garrity), 20-1 P Beaumont, 10 ran.

S'FORM: SHOW ME THE RIVER Dgr: Cappybara

1.50 WEATHERBYS BANK NOVICES' HURDLE (E) (10 flights) 2m4f/4 (14 runners) £3,690

1 50-00 ANOTHER TAIPIAN (13) A Williams 5 10 12 E Williams 71 61
2 2123 BLUECOAT (28)(B,F) M Murphy 5 10 12 Mr T Greenall 33
3 0344-CHIEF DAN GEORGE (12)(D) P Aspell 7 11 0 P Kinella 72
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Star Betting - 7-4, Unexplored, 4 Neagh, 6 Bluecoat, 8 Neidpath Castle, 10 August Rose, 14 Chief Dan George, 16 Blauvelt, 16 others.

2004: Blauvelt, 5-10-12, (G Lee, 13-8 fav) J Howard Johnson, 12 ran.

STARFORM: HIGH DAY Danger: Neagh

2.50 NOVICES' HANDICAP CHASE (F) (12 fences) 2m4f/4 (10 runners) £3,614

1 4362-ALBERTINO LAD (13) Miss L Russell 8 11 12 P Buchanan 33 47
2 5133-CORRIB LAD (194)(B,D,S) L McKnight 7 11 12 Mr T Greenall 33
3 0344-CHIEF DAN GEORGE (12)(D) P Aspell 7 11 0 P Kinella 72
4 0044-SHOW ME THE RIVER (12)(S) F Murphy 6 11 0 B Harding 94
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STARFORM: ALBERTINO LAD Dgr: Ideal Du Bois Beury

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TONY LEWIS

12.50 WULF LORD 2.20 THE MINER 1.50 NEAGH 2.20 MAUNBY ROCKER 2.50 SILVER SEDGE 3.20 JOLIKA 3.50 KNOCKARA LUCK

STAR TIP

12.50 ALFIE RICH 2.20 THE MINER 1.50 NEAGH 2.20 MAUNBY ROCKER 2.50 SILVER SEDGE 3.20 JOLIKA 3.50 KNOCKARA LUCK

GOING: Good to Soft-to Soft in Places

JACKPOT: & PLACEPOT: First six races.

TOP TRAINERS (with runners) L

(23% strike rate), -55.06, F Murphy 17, (12%), -270.33, R C Guest 15, (16%), -161.98, Mrs S J Smith 15, (16%), -25.60, M Towner 13, (20%), -55.18, J Howard Johnson 12, (15%), -35.29, N Richards 11, (26%), -33.83, M W Easterly 11, (15%), -33.50, J Jefferson 10, (16%), -330.54, P Monteith 9, (15%), -57.92, Miss L Russell 7, (18%), -39.97, Mrs H Graham 6, (25%), -335.00, W Collier 5, (15%), -582.00

2.20 CENTURY FM SELLING HANDICAP HDLE (E) (10 flights) 2m4f/4 (15 runners) £2,350

1 0002-PIER TALK (11)(D,F,G) M Towner 9 11 12 J Moorman 10 35
2 00P-PORT NATA (10)(F) J Murphy 7 11 6 L Stephens 71
3 0002-MAUNBY ROCKER (9)(B,F) P J Haslam 5 11 7 P Merrigan 67
4 0002-LAZI LENA (10)(F) M Towner 9 11 12 J Moorman 10 35
5 00P-FIFTEEN REDS (36)(C,D) J Murphy 10 11 4 M McAlister 77
6 0002-TOO STEPS (9)(B,T) M Towner 9 11 2 P Aspell 63
7 0002-STAR TROOPER (13)(D,S) M Towner 9 11 2 P Aspell 63
8 0002-CODY (20)(F) M Towner 9 11 2 P Aspell 63
9 0002-CHIVVY CHARGER (181) A Williams 8 11 1 E Williams 72
10 0002-LEAD LENA (10)(F) M Towner 9 11 2 J Moorman 10 35
11 0002-GLORY LASS (22)(P) M Towner 9 11 2 J Moorman 10 35
12 0002-JUST LAD (13)(C,D,G) M Towner 9 11 2 J Moorman 10 35
13 0002-FLEMMING (23)(D) J Senn 8 10 10 P C O'Neill 57
14 0002-QUATY WALLPAPER (9)(P) J R Norton 4 10 2 C Sharkey 77
15 0002-SAMSON DES GALAS (9) R Ford 10 10 2 G Lee 65

Star Betting - 6 Maunby Rucker, 7 Cody, 8 Star Trooper, 9 Too Steps, 10 Chivvy Charger, 12 others.

2004: Political Curve, 6-11-1, (W Dowling), 11-4 J Nixon, 11 ran.

STARFORM: MAUNBY ROCKER Dgr: Lazy Lena

2.50 NOVICES' HANDICAP CHASE (F) (12 fences) 2m4f/4 (10 runners) £3,614

1 4362-ALBERTINO LAD (13) Miss L Russell 8 11 12 P Buchanan 33 47
2 5133-CORRIB LAD (194)(B,D,S) L McKnight 7 11 12 Mr T Greenall 33
3 0344-CHIEF DAN GEORGE (12)(D) P Aspell 7 11 0 P Kinella 72
4 0044-SHOW ME THE RIVER (12)(S) F Murphy 6 11 0 B Harding 94
5 0023-WILD ABOUT HARRY (190) A Dixon 8 11 0 K Mercer 32
6 00P-PAVEY ARK (27)(D,F) J Moffatt 7 10 0 D McLean 77
7 0023-PAVEY ARK (27)(D,F) J Moffatt 7 10 0 D McLean 77
8 0023-PAVEY ARK (27)(D,F) J Moffatt 7 10 0 D McLean 77
9 0023-PAVEY ARK (27)(D,F) J Moffatt 7 10 0 D McLean 77

Star Betting - 7-4, Unexplored, 4 Neagh, 6 Bluecoat, 8 Neidpath Castle, 10 August Rose, 14 Chief Dan George, 16 Blauvelt, 16 others.

2004: Blauvelt, 5-10-12, (G Lee, 13-8 fav) J Howard Johnson, 12 ran.

STARFORM: ALBERTINO LAD Dgr: Ideal Du Bois Beury

2.50 NOVICES' HANDICAP CHASE (F) (12 fences) 2m4f/4 (10 runners) £3,614

1 4362-ALBERTINO LAD (13) Miss L Russell 8 11 12 P Buchanan 33 47
2 5133-CORRIB LAD (194)(B,D,S) L McKnight 7 11 12 Mr T Greenall 33
3 0344-CHIEF DAN GEORGE (12)(D) P Aspell 7 11 0 P Kinella 72
4 0044-SHOW ME THE RIVER (12)(S) F Murphy 6 11 0 B Harding 94
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Star Betting - 7-4, Unexplored, 4 Neagh, 6 Bluecoat, 8 Neidpath Castle, 10 August Rose, 14 Chief Dan George, 16 Blauvelt, 16 others.

2004: Blauvelt, 5-10-12, (G Lee, 13-8 fav) J Howard Johnson, 12 ran.

STARFORM: ALBERTINO LAD Dgr: Ideal Du Bois Beury

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8 0023-PAVEY ARK (27)(D,F) J Moffatt 7 10 0 D McLean 77
9 0023-PAVEY ARK (27)(D,F) J Moffatt 7 10 0 D McLean 77

Star Betting - 7-4, Unexplored, 4 Neagh, 6 Bluecoat, 8 Neidpath Castle, 10 August Rose, 14 Chief Dan George, 16 Blauvelt, 16 others.

2004: Blauvelt, 5-10-12, (G Lee, 13-8 fav) J Howard Johnson, 12 ran.

STARFORM: ALBERTINO LAD Dgr: Ideal Du Bois Beury

2.50 NOVICES' HANDICAP CHASE (F) (12 fences) 2m4f/4 (10 runners) £3,614

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4 0044-SHOW ME THE RIVER (12)(S) F Murphy 6 11 0 B Harding 94
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9 0023-PAVEY ARK (27)(D,F) J Moffatt 7 10 0 D McLean 77

Star Betting - 7-4, Unexplored, 4 Neagh, 6 Bluecoat, 8 Neidpath Castle, 10 August Rose, 14 Chief Dan George, 16 Blauvelt, 16 others.

2004: Blauvelt, 5-10-12, (G Lee, 13-8 fav) J Howard Johnson, 12 ran.

STARFORM: ALBERTINO LAD Dgr: Ideal Du Bois Beury

2.50 NOVICES' HANDICAP CHASE (F) (12 fences) 2m4f/4 (10 runners) £3,614

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9 0023-PAVEY ARK (27)(D,F) J Moffatt 7 10 0 D McLean 77

TOP JOCKEYS (with mounts) A Dobbin 35 winners, (21% strike rate), -55.53, G Lee 27, (14%), -220.33, K Renwick 13, (11%), -58.54, B Harding 11, (9%), -220.25, B Gibson 10, (15%), -54.23, P Buchanan 8, (12%), -51.70, A Dempsey 8, (10%), -53.88, Mr T Greenall 7, (18%), -51.92, R McGrath 7, (6%), -57.13, K Mercer 6, (18%), -59.25, D O'Meara 6, (9%), -225.25, D Costello 5, (10%), -588.75.

3.20 MENCAP HANDICAP HURDLE (F) (8 flights) 2m1f/4 (13 runners) £3,111

1 4092-THE NAMES BOND (160)(S) N Richards 7 11 12 Mr R Davidson 77 83
2 00P-LONG SHOT (50)(D,F,G) Miss L Russell 8 11 10 T Siddall 75
3 00P-KOMOTO (6) M Towner 9 11 2 P O'Neill 57 28
4 1P22-JOLIKA (158)(B,F,D,G,S) J Lango 8 11 7 J Emble 10 49
5 4500-WYN DIXIE (28) W Angus 8 11 5 G Berridge 75
6 24P1-BALL GAMES (9)(D,F,S) J Moffatt 7 11 7 Txd Mr Towner 9 11 2
7 1156-POLAR GUNNER (197)(D,S) J Jefferson 5 10 12 P Buchanan 33 68
8 0500-BRANTINO (F20) J Collier 5 10 10 A Ross 54
9 0000-MABIR (6) P Niven 5 10 8 K Mercer 37 75
10 4046-SILVER SEEKER (F30) A Dixon 5 10 8 P Aspell 63
11 00P-UPSWING (332) R C Guest 5 10 5 K Johnson 33
12 0000-BROMLEY ABBEY (13)(P) Miss S Foster 7 10 10 Mr C Storey 33 68
13 00P-GRATTON TRUCK (72)(D,G) Miss L Russell 8 11 10 P Buchanan 33
14 0000-BROMLEY ABBEY 9-13, Gratton Truck 9-10, Star Betting - 4 Jolika, 5 Ball Games, 11-2 The Names Bond, 7 Wyn Dixie, Polar Gunner, Silver Seeker, 10 Brantino, 14 others.

2004: Silken Pearls, 8-10-12, (G Berridge), 25

YARMOUTH ON 09055 141 601 (611)

TONY LEWIS		STAR TIP	
1.00 SEA MAP (treble)	1.00 SEA MAP	1.00 SEA MAP	1.00 SEA MAP
1.30 BRONZE STAR	1.30 BRONZE STAR	1.30 BRONZE STAR	1.30 BRONZE STAR
2.00 YORKIE	2.00 YORKIE	2.00 YORKIE	2.00 YORKIE
2.30 ORCHARD SUPREME	2.30 ORCHARD SUPREME	2.30 ORCHARD SUPREME	2.30 ORCHARD SUPREME
3.00 TREGARRON	3.00 TREGARRON	3.00 TREGARRON	3.00 TREGARRON
3.30 NUMERIC (map)	3.30 NUMERIC	3.30 NUMERIC	3.30 NUMERIC
4.00 STREET LIFE	4.00 STARGAZER JIM	4.00 STARGAZER JIM	4.00 STARGAZER JIM

STARFORM: 2.30 Glenbrook (nb); 3.50 (Hexham) Knocka Luck (treble); 4.00 Maxamillion (map).
 CLOCKWORK: 1.40 Fontwell The Newsman 1st win.
 ROTTWEILER: 1.00 Katana 1.30 Swayze 2.00 Montana 2.30 Zabeel Tower 3.00 Corky 3.30 Numeric 4.00 Maxamillion.

GOING: Heavy
 PLACEPOT: First six races.

TRACKFACTS Left-handed track almost flat with a run of five furlongs. It is quite a testing track with no advantage to any type of horse. High numbers have an advantage on the mile straight course. Stalls today Straight Stands Side, Remainder Inside.

TOP TRAINERS (with runners) Sir M Stoute 22 winners, (32% strike rate), +£16.66, M Channon 17, (14%), +£38.31, W Haggas 14, (16%), +£16.85, Mrs C Dunnett 13, (6%), +£69.50, N Callaghan 13, (19%), +£13.45, J Fanshawe 11, (16%), +£19.50, M Prescott 11, (26%), +£7.88, J Nosedá 9, (23%), +£10.16.

TOP JOCKEYS (with mounts) J P Spencer 26 winners, (19% strike rate), +£15.87, S Sanders 23, (15%), +£16.05, L Dettori 20, (22%), +£23.2, P Robinson 15, (11%), +£65.42, R Hills 12, (15%), +£25.98, Hayley Turner 11, (10%), +£68.75, N Callaghan 9, (12%), +£62.11, J Quinn 9, (6%), +£59.53.

A.C. PEMBROKE (BROTHERS) LIMITED SELLING STKS	
1.00 SEA MAP (15/1A) S Kirk 5.5	£2,491
2.00 WATERSHED DANCER (17/1) R Best 12	Hayley Turner 19
3.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
4.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
5.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
6.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
7.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
8.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31

Star Betting: -2 Sea Map, 9-4 Tanning, 6-7 Toes, 7 Katana, 10 Zulush, 14 Waterford Dancer, 16 Crisp Note, 25 Fine Cuisse.

2004: River of Diamonds, 8-12, (K Fallon, 11-10 fav) R Guest, drawn (5), 7.

STARFORM: SEA MAP Danger: Tanning	
1.00 SEA MAP (15/1A) S Kirk 5.5	£2,491
2.00 WATERSHED DANCER (17/1) R Best 12	Hayley Turner 19
3.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
4.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
5.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
6.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
7.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
8.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31

Star Betting: -2 Sea Map, 9-4 Tanning, 6-7 Toes, 7 Katana, 10 Zulush, 14 Waterford Dancer, 16 Crisp Note, 25 Fine Cuisse.

2004: Westland, 9-0, (K Fallon, 11-10 fav) Mrs A Perrett, drawn (6), 17 ran.

STARFORM: DESERVING Danger: Mannikko	
1.00 SEA MAP (15/1A) S Kirk 5.5	£2,491
2.00 WATERSHED DANCER (17/1) R Best 12	Hayley Turner 19
3.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
4.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
5.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
6.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
7.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
8.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31

Star Betting: -2 Sea Map, 9-4 Tanning, 6-7 Toes, 7 Katana, 10 Zulush, 14 Waterford Dancer, 16 Crisp Note, 25 Fine Cuisse.

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4.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
5.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
6.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
7.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
8.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31

Star Betting: -2 Sea Map, 9-4 Tanning, 6-7 Toes, 7 Katana, 10 Zulush, 14 Waterford Dancer, 16 Crisp Note, 25 Fine Cuisse.

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6.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
7.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
8.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31

Star Betting: -2 Sea Map, 9-4 Tanning, 6-7 Toes, 7 Katana, 10 Zulush, 14 Waterford Dancer, 16 Crisp Note, 25 Fine Cuisse.

2004: Westland, 9-0, (K Fallon, 11-10 fav) Mrs A Perrett, drawn (6), 17 ran.

STARFORM: DESERVING Danger: Mannikko	
1.00 SEA MAP (15/1A) S Kirk 5.5	£2,491
2.00 WATERSHED DANCER (17/1) R Best 12	Hayley Turner 19
3.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
4.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
5.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
6.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
7.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
8.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31

Star Betting: -2 Sea Map, 9-4 Tanning, 6-7 Toes, 7 Katana, 10 Zulush, 14 Waterford Dancer, 16 Crisp Note, 25 Fine Cuisse.

2004: Westland, 9-0, (K Fallon, 11-10 fav) Mrs A Perrett, drawn (6), 17 ran.

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1.00 SEA MAP (15/1A) S Kirk 5.5	£2,491
2.00 WATERSHED DANCER (17/1) R Best 12	Hayley Turner 19
3.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
4.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
5.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
6.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
7.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31
8.00 CRISP MOUNT (22/1B) R Bestman 8.1	Saleem Golam 31

2.00 MINT CASINO GREAT YARMOUTH HANDICAP

Class 6		6f (20 runners)		£5,107	
1	(15)	243065	BABBARA (21/1) Channon 3 0	A Cuthane	57
2	(7)	200205	WINTHROP (25/1) J 5 8 13	J P Spencer	49
3	(10)	05005	SCUBA (12/1) H Morrison 3 8	S Browne	38
4	(3)	048500	COOL SANDS (45/1) D A Shaw 3 8	K Darley	44
5	(8)	315400	MUGELA (10/1) C G T M S G Kellaway 4 8 12	A Kirby	65
6	(1)	03203	BABBARA (21/1) Channon 3 0	A Cuthane	57
7	(11)	200201	LABELLED WITH LOVE (52/1) D A Shaw 3 8	A Quinn	33
8	(12)	302223	MONTANA (26/1) J Spence 5 8 11	F Norton	52
9	(16)	030032	KING OF MEZE (17/1) J Wright 4 8 11	T Evans	52
10	(1)	003101	MYTTON'S BELL (17/1) D A Shaw 3 8	J Fanning	40
11	(20)	4000	LEGAL BELLE (9/1) J Spence 3 8 10	S Hitchcott	56
12	(4)	030306	RATERS MUSIC (99/1) D A Shaw 3 8	N Callan	40
13	(13)	056000	TRACE CLIP (16/1) F Roster 7 8 9	L Kenry	57
14	(2)	031062	QUANTICA (36/1) C D S N Tinker 6 8 9	Kim Tinker	67
15	(1)	004412	YORKIE (11/1) B C D Z A G Pearce 6 8 8	J Quinn	53
16	(14)	0433	TROUBLE MAKER (11/1) Bailing 4 8 9	R Moore	40
17	(12)	350040	MAJOR (95/1) D A Shaw 3 8	J Egan	33
18	(10)	148035	EXTEMPORISE (6/1) A S J Clement 5 8 11	M Fenton	56
19	(1)	000692	SHOUT (27/1) F S B J O'Reilly 7 8 9	J D O'Reilly	49
20	(19)	110044	BROMBER BOMBER (7/1) D A Shaw 3 8	Hayley Turner	43

Star Betting: -13-2 Mytton's Bell, 7 Quantic, 8 Labelled With Love, Montana, Yorkie, 10 King of Meze, 12 Sholto, 14 others.

2004: No corresponding race.

STARFORM: QUANTICA Danger: Yorkie

2.30 CRYSTAL CLEANING NURSERY HANDICAP

Class 5		2YO		1m (20 runners)		£4,728	
1	(16)	65186	WEEKEND FEVER (20/1) M Johnston 9	K Darley	52		
2	(18)	40101	HILL OF GRACE (7/1) A Nosedá 9	S W Kelly	36		
3	(9)	055	ORANGE STRAWBERRY (24/1) Sir M Stoute 9.5	J P Spencer	65		
4	(4)	600401	SANDS OF BARRA (15/1) S Callaghan 9.5	Saleem Golam	31		
5	(11)	400424	ZABEEL TOWER (16/1) M Channon 3.3	A Cuthane	63		
6	(17)	0111	OTTION DANCER (32/1) J Quinn 3.2	G Gibbons	67		
7	(20)	653032	BOYONE (21/1) C M Quinn 8.1	Rory Moore	51		
8	(4)	605	ROYAL PREMIER (17/1) D Collingridge 8.13	S Egan	68		
9	(15)	014200	MOI AUSSI (16/1) M Prescott 9.2	S Sanders	49		
10	(5)	4250	RICHARD RUNNER (19/1) V A King 8.2	J D Smith	70		
11	(7)	00061	ORCHARD SUPREME (3/1) S Rannan 8 12/6	R L Moore	61		
12	(1)	036801	GLENBUCK (19/1) V A King 8 12/6	J Fanning	60		
13	(12)	00541	CHEVELEY FLYER (50/1) Pessa 8.6	J Egan	60		
14	(2)	606	AT THE MONEY (12/1) J Eustace 8.4	Hayley Turner	59		
15	(1)	0042	MAGICAL MUSIC (148/1) J Pearce 8.1	F Norton	72		
16	(10)	0001	DANCE DU LAMBIE (50/1) D French Davis 8.0	J McDonald	57		

2004: Bowled Out, 8-6, (T P Quayle, 25-1) P McBride, drawn (13), 20 ran.
 GLENBUCK proved a real stunner when claiming first place when slaming Laticone (rec 2lb) by 13l. Catliff 71 Class 5 m/sd/sot on Tuesday landing a gamble in the process. He can gain a quick follow up though it will not be plain sailing for him. He has a good chance to win the second division of that event by 6l giving 2lb to Lady Lochinvar. 404 Hattam's youngster, 125lb, achieved a slightly faster time than the 3lb pull in favour of the selection more than offsets that. Countering some cut for the first time, Sands Of Barra showed

2004: Bowled Out, 8-6, (T P Quayle, 25-1) P McBride, drawn (13), 20 ran.

TOP TRAINERS		<div> <div></div> <div> Culls cost £40 per mile on a 2.1 handicap </div> </div>	
(with runners) G L Moore 47 winners, (23% strike rate), +£27.23, M Pipe 43, (27%), -£10.09, R Rowe 18, (13%), +£26.51, C L Tizzard 12, (16%), -£12.23, W Wells 10, (14%), +£22.32, J Williams 8, (33%), -£0.00, J Mullins 8, (11%), -£9.92, N Gifford 6, (17%), +£17.75, C Wareham 4, (33%), +£14.10, R Alner 5, (8%), +£40.05, A King 4, (1%), -£2.75, M E Lovell 4, (1%), +£6.63, O Sherwood 3, (7%), -£19.75, P Winkworth 3, (7%), +£2.00, D Keane 2, (12%), +£50.00, P R Webber 2, (13%), -£6.25, J Portman 2, (10%), -£16.25, Miss A M Newton-Smith 2, (7%), +£10.50.			

2 10 BETH POKER H'CAP H'DL (SERIES QUALIFIER)

Star Betting: -13-2 Mytton's Bell, 7 Quantic, 8 Labelled With Love, Montana, Yorkie, 10 King of Meze, 12 Sholto, 14 others.

2004: No corresponding race.

3	303936	MISTIFIED (15/1)	Mullins 4 to 10.	Places 4	\$7,731	R	57/33	95
		Runs 6	Wins 2					
4	162445	CANNI THINKKAA (9/1S)(P)	4 to 10.	Places 5	\$5,513	R	Lucky Bullet	91
		Runs 14	Wins 1					
		Runs 14	Wins 1		\$5,776			
Star Betting:—7-4 Asakuta, 11-4 Come By, 3 Canna Thinkka, 4 Mistified.								
2004: Makooli, 4-11-5, (N Fehly, 6-12) C Mann, 9 ran.								
STARFORM: ASSON Danger: Come Bye								
2	44014	CHRIS KINANE TRUST NOVICES	Chase					
		Cable E mares/15 fences/2m4f	(7 runners)		\$4,662			
		Runs 20	Wins 2	Places 3	\$11,173			
2	683-PUP	COLD CARROLL (38)	Mrs Tracey Bartol-Snow 7 to 12		\$5,000	M	McPail	61

Star Betting: -13-2 Mytton's Bell, 7 Quantic, 8 Labelled With Love, Montana, Yorkie, 10 King of Meze, 12 Sholto, 14 others.

2004: No corresponding race.

6	00050U	MINNIE THE MOOCHER (34)	M Jains 5 10 12	K Young	63
		Runs 6	Wins 0	Places 0	
6	160F-1	RESEDA (176/1) Q	S Williams 6 10 12	A McCoy	59
		Runs 8	Wins 2	Places 1	53/283
7	651ARP	STARLIGHT EXPRESS (257/1) Q	M S Lavelle 5 10 12	B Fenton	65
		Runs 1	Wins 1	Places 0	65/406
Star Betting: - 7/4 Reseda, 9/4 Caballo, 9/2 Esabrook Jane, 8 Starlight Express, 12 Dedrunmunky, 16 Minnie The Moocher, 20 Cool Carroll.					
2004: Romany Dream, 6-10-12, (8 Hitchcott, 7-2) R Dickinson, 6 ran.					
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Hamed ready for comeback
NAZEEM MISSED BOXING ... and it's missed me

FORMER world featherweight king Naseem Hamed is ready to make a shock return to the ring in the New Year.

Hamed has not fought since his laboured points win over Spaniard Manuel Calvo in London back in May, 2002, but now the Sheffield fighter says he is anxious to get back into action.

He has his own gym in the city and I understand that he is desperately keen to get back into the kind of shape that could see him make a comeback early next year.

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Scene

Hamed has lost only one of his 37 bouts - against Marco Antonio Barrera in March, 2001 - and has always maintained that he can return to the international scene which he dominated for so long.

He has been in regular contact with Denis Hobson, the promoter whose Fight Academy organisation will be staging Ricky Hatton's light-welterweight unification match with Carlos

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Torch

"Before that, he never had the opportunities to prove himself at the top level. Against Tszyu he had that opportunity and made the most of it."

"Now I believe he'll go and carry the torch for British boxing in the next few years."

FREDDIE'S READY

ANDREW Flintoff has backed England's team spirit to help them beat Pakistan.

Flintoff, who linked up with the squad along with fellow ICC Super Series player Steve Harmison yesterday, is one of the players at Michael Vaughans disposal capable of winning a match on his own.

But he is keen to credit Vaughan for forging the togetherness that has made England such a formidable team.

Pockets

'Freddie' said: "The spirit is something which has come together over the past two and a half years or so, since Michael has taken over."

"Just arriving here this morning I can already see it is pretty much where it was when I was last with the team. The new lads seem to have fitted in well. In some



BUZZING: Naseem Hamed is set to end his exile after nearly four years

by KEVIN FRANCIS

Maussa in Sheffield on November 26.

Hobson told me: "Naseem seems to have the boxing buzz back. He has told me that if he does come back he would like to work with me."

"I've told him that I would be only too pleased to do that."

Hamed will be at ringside at the Sheffield Arena to watch Hatton, and he can't wait to see him in action.

He said: "Ricky is a great fighter. In beating Kostya Tszyu he managed to achieve something I never did in my career - he beat a legend,

an all-time great of his weight division.

"He was too strong and too determined for Tszyu and I believe Hatton is good enough to now go on and match my 15 world title defences."

"I think Ricky's win over Tszyu was one of the biggest wins by a British fighter ever."

by RODNEY WHITE

ways a trip like this enhances the spirit, because you spend all your time together in each other's pockets," he said.

"You come closer as a side, if that is possible from where we were when the Ashes finished. We have come so far as a side and we want to keep improving."

Flintoff has already been picking the brains of former Lancashire team-mate and Pakistani great Wasim Akram about what to expect on the tour.

He added: "There are passages of play here where you can take wickets, and you have to identify them quickly."

"There will be other times where you need to sit in - as you do with the bat - and others where you can attack and go for the stumps."

TRI-NATIONS CRUNCH: Noble makes the Brits Bullish



STOPPED: Adrian Morley foiled at QPR

RFL need Lions in final pot

THERE'S a lot more riding on Great Britain's clash with Australia tomorrow than just the pride of the Lions.

A second successive Tri-Nations defeat for coach Brian Noble's men would virtually spell the end of their hopes of making the final on November 26.

And that would cost the RFL around £400,000 as Elland Road wouldn't sell out for an Australia-New Zealand final and that would also hit merchandising.

The Kiwis' success in reaching their potential after the disappointment of last year's campaign has put huge pressure on Britain and Australia at the JJB Stadium.

Squeeze

Britain could still make the final if they lose tomorrow but it would mean them beating the Kiwis and the Aussies on successive weekends and possibly squeeze through on points difference.

The decision to take a Test to Loftus Road has come under attack this week. The Kiwi support in London more than matched the noise from



the Lions fans and QPR's tight pitch suited New Zealand's pack.

Sponsors Gillette apparently insisted on a game in the capital and Loftus Road was the only venue available but it begs the question that if the game had been played at a sold-out northern ground - and on a wider pitch - would that extra emotional charge from the fans have helped Britain over the line?

FORMER New Zealand coach Graham Lowe has added his voice to the row over Lesley Vainikolo's withdrawal from the Kiwi squad to have knee surgery.

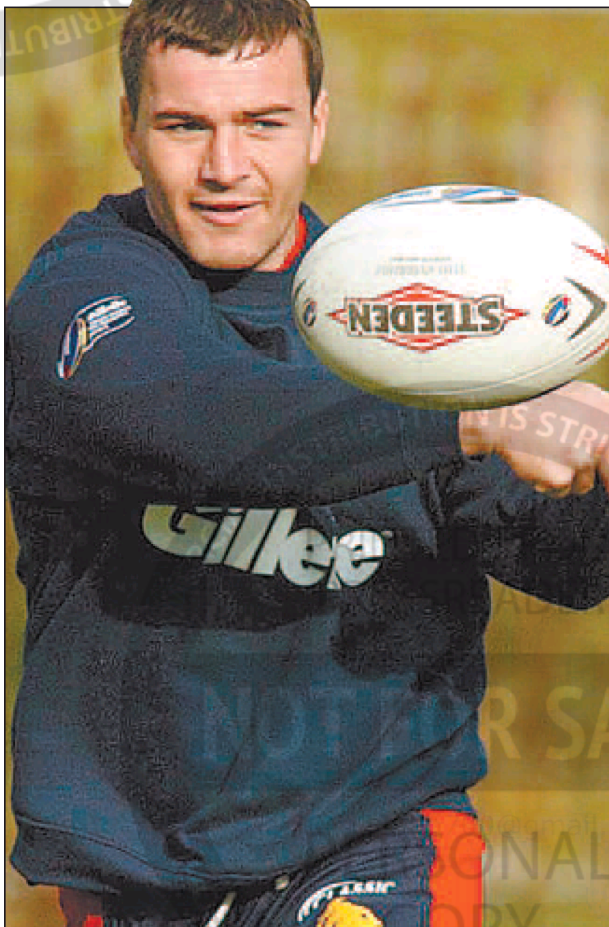
"If a player is chosen for his country he should be prepared to crawl over broken glass to do it," he said.

CASTLEFORD intend to name their new coach next week in what will be an exercise in brinkmanship. The Tigers report back for training a week on Monday and season tickets go on sale on November 22.

Hull coach Shaun McRae is in the frame but Tony Kemp remains the favourite.

SPECULATION mounts that Denis Betts could be leaving Wigan to go to rugby union with Gloucester, where Henry Paul is tipped to leave for Harlequins RLFC.

HARRIS TO POP ROOS



MUM'S THE WORD: Iestyn Harris is expected to make a great impact

by MARTIN RICHARDS

GREAT BRITAIN expect Iestyn Harris to do his duty tomorrow - even if his wife gives birth before he takes the field in the crunch Tri-Nations battle with Australia.

Harris has been recalled for the must-win clash at Wigan alongside Bradford Bulls half-back partner Paul Deacon, who has retained his place despite being substituted after only 25 minutes of Saturday's defeat by New Zealand.

Stand-off Harris was left out of the side at Loftus Road after missing the squad's training in Spain to be with his missus.

But Lions and Bradford coach Brian Noble is looking for him and Deacon to provide the spark for Britain that took the Bulls to the Super League title.

Noble includes seven of the Bulls' Grand Final-winning side with Adrian Morley given a starting role at prop after being surprisingly benched for the Kiwi game.

Hull's Richard Horne, who was another half-back option, misses out but team-mate Jamie Thackray is set for a place on the bench with Lee Gilmour likely to be the one to drop out from the five named subs.

Leeds skipper Kevin Sinfield switches to loose forward to accommodate Harris, who is still awaiting the birth of his second child.

Unlucky

But the Welshman insists that he is ready to put his country first at the 25,050 sell-out JJB Stadium.

Noble said: "We were always going to look at the half-back partnership of Harris and Deacon but when Iestyn didn't go to Spain for warm-weather training, other people moved ahead of him."

"His wife has not given birth yet but it will not be an issue even if it happens on the day. Iestyn has worked hard this week and is ready to play against Australia."

"We looked at various permutations and Richard Horne can count himself unlucky to be left out of the 19. It doesn't mean he has been ruled out for our two other qualifying games."

"Obviously Iestyn and Paul have played together for Bradford and Iestyn's form is much improved on the back end of last year when he looked good in patches."

"There has been a massive improvement in his consistency."

"People don't see how much work he puts in on the training pitch. He is meticulous. His form in the last 12 weeks of the season for Bradford warranted selection. He is now becoming the leader he was when he left Leeds to go to union."

Vote

Deacon has been given a vote of confidence despite being replaced at Loftus Road.

Noble said: "It was no reflection on how he was playing. We needed to speed the game up."

"We weren't getting the ball in their half and were nearly 20 points down. But Deacon and Harris work well together and Deacon will be first-choice goal kicker."

GREAT BRITAIN: Wellens; Carney, Gleeson, Senior, Pryce; Harris, Deacon, Fielden, Cunningham, Morley, Johnson, Peacock (capt), Sinfield, Subs (from): Higham, Thackray, Gilmour, Ellis, Walker.



TINDALL: Vital role

Tindall back in the fold

by DEAN WILSON

ENGLAND have turned to World Cup heroes Mike Tindall and Ben Cohen for the first time in a year in a bid to gain revenge on Australia.

Both players are in the squad for the first autumn international tomorrow week, although Cohen may start on the bench.

Head coach Andy Robinson will ask Tindall to anchor his midfield fully 12 months after playing his last game for England against the Aussies in a nail-biting 21-19 defeat.

Despite some shaky recent displays for Wasps, full-back Mark van Gisbergen has been given a vote of confidence.

Leader

Robinson said: "Mike Tindall has been missed over the last year and I think that he is one of those players who is influential as a leader and in the team."

"He is a player I know will deliver for England on the pitch, while Ben Cohen's work-rate and his performances have been outstanding lately."

"As for Mark van Gisbergen, all players go through difficult patches. I've been very pleased with what he's done and how he has fitted in."

"He is in the squad and I've got no doubts about him."

SQUAD: Backs - Barkley, Cohen, Cusack, Dawson, Ellis, Hodgson, Lewsey, Noon, Tindall, Van Gisbergen. Forwards - Borthwick, Corry (capt), Deacon, Grewcock, Jones, Mears, Moody, Sanderson, Sheridan, Stevens, Thompson, Vickery.

Rudd: No kidding

WALES boss Mike Ruddock has dismissed claims that All Blacks counterpart Graham Henry is using a four-match tour to bring on the kids.

Wales bid to end a 52-year losing sequence against the Tri-Nations champions in the Millennium Stadium tomorrow. They are also chasing a ninth successive victory since New Zealand beat them 26-25 in Cardiff last November.

New Zealand, seeking a first Grand Slam trip since 1978, then tackle Ireland, England and Scotland.

There are plenty of rookies among the 35-man All Blacks squad, but Ruddock insisted: "The players will be focused on winning the Grand Slam and they will want to kick it off with a big win."

Tomorrow's clash will mark 100 years of Test matches between Wales and New Zealand.

SPORTWORD

ACROSS

1. Patel, former Worcestershire and New Zealand batsman (5)
4. Michael, men's singles, French Open champion in 1989 aged 17 (5)
7. See 21 across
8. O'Gara, Ireland and British Lions outside half (5)
9. Standard, Belgian football team (5)
10. Bosra, winner of the 1000 Guineas in 1996 (4)
11. Bob, men's long jump Olympic champion in 1968 (6)
14. Steve, former Glamorgan and England bowler (6)
15. Rags, 1000 Guineas winner in 1966 (4)
18. City which staged the European athletics championships in 1990 (5)
20. Matthew, Welsh 400m hurdler (5)
21. and 7 across and 12 down. Winner of the 1000 Guineas in 1979 (3,2,1,7)
22. Davies, Everton and Wales midfielder (5)
23. and 13 down. Boxer, world heavyweight champion in 1962 (5,6)

DOWN

1. Andy Fordham's sport (5)
2. Birmingham City and England under-21 player (7)
3. Don, American boxing promoter (4)
4. Finlay, British Lions captain in 1989 (6)
5. Mafe, former British male sprinter (3)
6. Norwich City and England goalkeeper (5)
12. See 21 across
13. See 23 across
14. Lawrence Dallaglio's rugby club (5)
16. Hare, Nottingham, Leicester and England rugby full back (5)
17. The, nickname of Brentford FC (4)
19. Pat, Northampton, Newcastle and Samoa back row forward (3)



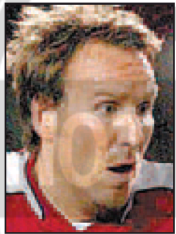
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SERIOUSLY
football

FA CUP: Underdogs target league scalps



Jason shock treatment



MERSON: Two upsets

I don't
want a
treble—
Merson

■ by TIM GRAY

BOSS Paul Merson is desperate to avoid a hat-trick of FA Cup upsets when he takes his Walsall side to Merthyr Tydfil for tonight's tricky first-round clash.

Former England star Merson was part of the Arsenal side beaten by Wrexham in 1992.

And 12 months ago he was in charge of Walsall when they went out at Slough.

Merson, who was an FA Cup winner with Arsenal when they beat Sheffield Wednesday in a replay in 1993, said: "Losing to Slough was the lowest point of my career."

Video

"This game against Merthyr is a chance for us to redeem ourselves. It could be another banana skin for us but we know what we have to do against Merthyr."

"Every team in the draw will have wanted to get Walsall because of the players we have in the team and what happened to us last season."

"The lads will be up for this like you would not believe because we don't want a repeat of the Slough result."

"I have got a video of the Slough game ready. We will be watching it on the coach to the game with Merthyr just to see how happy the Slough players were when they beat us."

"I have seen Merthyr play and have had them watched as well."

Party

"I have talked to other managers, know their players inside out and will be showing them the utmost respect."

Merthyr manager Tim Harris is optimistic that his Southern Premier League side can cause an upset.

Harris came close to a big cup shock when former club Newport County forced a replay and extra-time against League One Blackpool four years ago.

Harris, 45, said: "It's going to be a fantastic occasion."

"I know what the people are like around here, it'll be just one big party—even more so if we pull off any kind of result."

■ by ALEX CROOK

the alarm bells ringing for Forest boss Gary Megson tomorrow.

Matthews said: "We are not going there just to make up the numbers."

Dream

"Forest are a massive club and to get the chance to play former FA Cup winners on their own ground is a dream come true."

"I spend every day working with electricians, so maybe I can give Gary Megson a shock," Matthews

came off the bench to help Exeter to a 0-0 draw with Everton in the third round six years ago.

And he admitted: "That was probably the highlight of my career."

"I was not really getting picked at the time but our first-choice keeper, Stuart Naylor, got a bump on the head in the first half."

"I came on at half-time and kept a clean sheet."

"I made quite a few saves and even got interviewed on Match Of The Day, so hopefully history will repeat itself on Saturday."

CAMBRIDGE CITY ace Paul Booth wants to turn the tables on fabled giant-killers Hereford – by dumping them out of the FA Cup.

Hereford pulled off one of the biggest shocks in cup history when Ricky George's goal sent Newcastle crashing out in 1972.

But Booth, Cambridge's top scorer, reckons they could be in for a shock when they visit the Conference South outfit tonight.

"We are definitely the underdogs but that means there is no pressure on us at all," he said.

PLAN PAYS
FOR GRAYS

UP FOR IT: Grays boss Mark Stimson wants more cup success after the FA Trophy triumph

Wage freeze
keeps Mark's
boys hungry

MARK STIMSON led Grays Athletic to glory in one FA cup competition last year – now he is desperate to enjoy some success in the big one.

The former Newcastle and Spurs star guided the Essex outfit to the double last season – the Conference South title and the FA Trophy, which they won after a nail-biting final at Villa Park. Stimson's young side travel to York in the first round tomorrow.

And he believes the tie will prove a worthwhile distraction from their record-breaking league form.

Since winning promotion, they have equalled the best start to a Conference season and a point at Accrington Stanley next Saturday will see them beat it.

But Stimson said: "It's a great distraction for us to be at this stage of the FA Cup."

Amazing

"The oldest player in my team is 28 and a lot of them haven't really tasted this competition before."

"I got to the fifth round with Newcastle and I had a good run with Canvey Island a couple of years ago, so I've always loved it."

Stimson believes the club's prudent wage policy has helped their amazing start to the campaign.

Although Grays are officially full-time, most of the players are not paid a salary over the summer.

And the boss reckons this helps feed their hunger to succeed.

He added: "When I took over, we had a lot of journeymen and they didn't

want to run around. They had a part-time attitude."

"The group of players I've got now is so young and enthusiastic and a lot of the time we have to drag them in off the training pitch."

"From July to the middle of August they all came in, basically without pay – and we really put them through it in pre-season."

"That shows you how much they want to be football players."

Stimson insists his target for this season is a top-10 Conference finish, which will secure qualification for next season's LDV Vans competition.

But he recently quit his part-time job with the Spurs academy to devote more time to the non-league side and would love a return to White Hart Lane in the cup.

He added: "It would be great to have a run in this competition."

"Tottenham away would be amazing but I suppose I'd settle for a trip to St James's Park to play Newcastle."

TEXT
MANIACS

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Havin endured that CRAP Man U last nite it reminded me East enders is on 2nite, 2 HORROR SHOWS. Now we'll see were the bandwagon jumpers go! Big Micky, L, gan FOR THE GOONERS, deserved nothing against us at the lane. DAN BLANCO

Y r wigan fans already talkin of europe? rudy leither

THIS IS A MESSAGE FOR THE PREMIERSHIP SUNDELAND AFC ARE STAYING UP!! Col c SAFC

To Aus the Scouse. How many years since you last won at Selhurst Park? Ray The Eagle

To on looking chelsea and man utd fans: Sit down and shut up, the pie eaters are winning it this year! Ging, Wigan

Take it anfield will be having a minute's silence for best mate. You'll never gallop again matey, we love you and you're always in our hearts. mickefc

2 boro bob: how come u simgmonsters r the top team in the northeast just cause u beat man u but u got beat of the worst team ever in the premiership – the mackems. doug smb

to mainroad: u cant even fill the away section at goodison big club my a***. paddock blue

2 boro bob: u wud b in div 3 if wasnt 4 S. Gibson, playn darlo yr proper derby. Safe - nufc no interest in ya it club. Paul safe.

To Dave from Oxford: I served with Whittle in forces. He is no coward, I date u 2 say it 2 his face! ANON

LILLE I MAN UTD O I LOVE IT LOVE IT LOVE IT ADMIT IT U BUNCH OF DIVERS N CHEATS YOUR FINISHED. PHIL ROWLANDS

fletcher got 2 b nephew of ferguson only way he get a game. peter

Rooney better look after his FA cup losers medal coz its only 1 he's gonna get. PROPER BLUE

east manc jambo ure spouting garbage the tic are top and we're staying there. All hail wee gordon keep the faith! fat jacks bhoy

To big red waf: More chance tony b quiting than u beating us, can afford to lose in europe u cant. ant cfc

well said boro bob, a rare voice of reason in the north – newcastle and sunderland are jokes. anon

whats all this shouting, well have no trouble here. Come on blue boys. efcitilde

Just a big thankyou to steve cottrell for making burnley a bigger club than PNE. Welsy

Is it just me or should fletcher not be in the utd squad he has no pace cant tackle and cant pass. trav

to boro bob: when you have played in the champions league won the Fa cup and have the second biggest crowds every week then call yourself a big club. geordie Rob

2 wigan scum: u av played nobody yet so dont get excited. 1 word, relegated. rudy leigh

COME ON UNCLE ALBERT YA NOT GOIN AT THE VILLA AGAIN. CHANGE THE RECORD CHAP YA STARTIN TO GET BORING. BUT YA NOT GOT NOWT ELSE TO TALK ABOUT. VILLA BILL

if ye go won't ye send back, a boss from lithuania ha ha. londonhills

Bruce's plea on lad Alex

by DAVE ARMITAGE

STRUGGLING Steve Bruce may have to turn to his son to help fight a relegation crisis.

The Birmingham boss has recalled 20-year-old Alex Bruce from a loan spell at Tranmere.

And now Bruce Snr is trying to get special dispensation from the Premiership to play him because he has 10 players on the treatment table.

He said: "Alex might be on the bench if we can get something sorted."

It would be a baptism of fire for his lad as Bruce tries to drag City out of the bottom three against a Newcastle side buoyed by three successive victories.

Punished

Bad-boy Jermaine Pennant will figure in Bruce's plans despite being fined two weeks' wages this week for allegedly turning up for training in an unfit state.

Bruce said: "He's been dealt with and he's in the squad. As far as I'm concerned that's the end of it. He's been punished."

Bruce knows he comes up against a side which has Michael Owen enjoying a great spell of form and he said: "That's why Michael Owen cost Newcastle £17m."

"I've got enough to worry about as it is but Michael is the best centre forward of his kind in the country."

Baggies 'too nice'

by DAVE ARMITAGE

BRYAN ROBSON has ordered his West Brom strugglers to start being nasty to each other.

The Albion boss said: "When I played at Man United, can you imagine players like Mark Hughes, Paul Ince, Roy Keane, Steve Bruce and Peter Schmeichel all being as nice as pie with each other?"

"It just didn't happen. We were good mates off the pitch but when we were playing we weren't afraid to dish it out."

"My lads seem a bit laid back. They're such good mates I feel they don't want to shout at each other."

Money in Branque

by ALISTAIR GRANT

CHRIS COLEMAN will offer Steed Malbranque a new big-money contract to keep him out of the clutches of Manchester City.

The Fulham boss snubbed a £5m bid from tomorrow's opponents in the summer but expects a fresh City raid in January.

The French midfielder, 25, is out of contract at the end of next season and this week said he is in no rush to sign a new deal.

But Coleman said last night: "We'll open talks with him and ideally we'd like to do it sooner rather than later."

SERIOUSLY football

Calamity in shock England call

JAMO'S ARGY BARGY

Woodgate also in Sven's plans



BACK IN FAVOUR: David James is set to replace Chris Kirkland for England

CALAMITY keeper David James is ready for a shock England return in next week's friendly against Argentina.

Also set for a recall is Jonathan Woodgate, who is in such brilliant form for Real Madrid following his long injury nightmare.

Manchester City No.1 James, who was axed after his second-half shocker against Denmark in August, is likely to replace the injured Chris Kirkland.

Howlers

England coach Sven Goran Eriksson is going back to James because the goalkeeping cupboard is bare.

But the decision will still stun fans who have become fed up with James' howlers.

He was dreadful against the Danes, even admitting afterwards he had not prepared properly for the early-season friendly.

The 35-year-old has since apologised and vowed it would never happen again. He has also been supported by City

by BRIAN WOOLNOUGH

manager Stuart Pearce, who says his man has never let him down.

James could even find himself going to the World Cup next year if he impresses in the build-up to the Argentina match in Geneva.

Eriksson is worried about the lack of experience among his back-up keepers. Since James was dropped, Eriksson's three keepers have been Spurs' Paul Robinson, now his No.1 choice; West Brom's Kirkland and Robert Green of Norwich.

Kirkland and Green have no big-match experience and an injury to Robinson would leave England relying on a novice.

So back comes James and he can count himself the luckiest player in England.

Many thought that his international career was over but Eriksson has been forced to pick



WOODGATE: Real contender

him again. Pearce said: "If we are talking about who are the best three keepers in England, David James is one of them."

"I have seen a lot of games around the country and I would be surprised if there were three better than David."

"He has been sensational for us since he was left out of the England team."

Woodgate's call, meanwhile, puts even more pressure on Rio Ferdinand, who has been strug-

gling in Manchester United's own slump.

Eriksson is blessed with a number of centre-halves - it is the strongest part of his squad - and Woodgate joins John Terry, Sol Campbell, Jamie Carragher, Ledley King and Ferdinand in the fight to make it to Germany next year.

Eriksson, however, knows he can use King and Carragher in other positions.

King, especially, is earmarked for the holding midfield role against top opponents and could find himself in that spot against Argentina in Switzerland a week tomorrow.

Crossed

Woodgate will be keeping everything crossed he doesn't break down again.

He is regarded as an outstanding footballing centre-half and Eriksson will want to gauge whether his injury and long lay-off has affected him as an international.

If he keeps playing like he is at the moment, Woodgate is going to hand Eriksson a huge selection problem.



PARDEW: Transfer budget

Benni's from heaven for Pard

by SCOTT COLEMAN

ALAN PARDEW will put together a new bid for Porto striker Benni McCarthy when the transfer window opens in January.

The Hammers boss, who signed a new five-year deal on Wednesday, will have around £8m to strengthen his squad.

McCarthy remains a target after a failed bid to bring him to Upton Park in August.

After West Ham's solid start to life back in the Premiership, Pardew reckons top-class stars are now more likely to come to east London.

And the former Reading chief cannot wait for the transfer window to open.

He said: "I want us to achieve things."

"The figures that were talked about between me and the board gives me a good chance and that's what I want to achieve."

Forward

"They wanted to know what my plans were for the club, and I wanted to know what that level of investment was. That fits in roughly where I think we can take the club."

"We have some investment that I'm going to use in the next window and let's see how quickly we can move forward from there."

"We are armed with a budget that could potentially buy a player who can play in the Champions League. That could be a £1m player or a £5m player."

"The level of investment is definitely good enough to make an impact in the Premiership."

"I had a budget at the start of the year, so I know what is left of that and it has not changed. That is always a good sign."

Meanwhile, defender Elliott Ward could leave Upton Park on loan in a bid to play regular first-team football.

Mick defends new recruits

MICK MCCARTHY last night hit back at accusations that his transfer policy is behind Sunderland's problems this season.

With the Black Cats rooted to the foot of the table and still reeling from the 4-1 defeat to Portsmouth, fans are pinning the blame on McCarthy's summer buying spree.

They claim that by going for quantity ahead of quality, he is responsible for his own downfall.

The Sunderland boss brought in 12

by IAN MURTAGH

players in readiness for the Premiership campaign but, due to a limited budget, only Jon Stead at £1.8m and £1.2m keeper Kelvin Davis cost a seven-figure fee.

And both have failed to sparkle so far, with Stead still without a goal and Davis under fire from supporters after a series of nervy displays.

But McCarthy remains unapologetic about spreading his resources

so thinly. He said: "I've heard it said I should have made three expensive signings instead of bringing in 12. But against Portsmouth I only had 14 fit outfield players, so God knows what I'd have done if I'd listened to them."

"My heart-rate didn't exactly go up when I heard there'd be no money to spend in January because I wasn't expecting any."

"I've done well in the past with limited resources so why not again?"

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BLUFF DETECTION

Bluffing is a very powerful weapon. The great professional players use it all the time. How can you counter it? You need several pieces of intel to give you better than a fifty-fifty chance of guessing if a player is bluffing you online or in a live, social game.

TELL TALE SIGNALS

Watch for an opposing player's comfort level. When someone is setting out on a bluff it is almost impossible for them to behave as they would normally. Their stress levels go up however good they are at deception. Watch for it. Most players' "non verbal" behaviour mirrors that of those around them at the table. Look for stress induced physical reactions out of step with the other players. Verbally, someone who is being honest will appear much more comfortable and at ease than a liar. You can tune your instincts to pick up on these signals with experience. Similar but less obvious signals are betrayed online also. This is especially true if someone becomes more active in the chat box at a time you are beginning to get the whiff of a bluff. Bluffers like a distraction to occur while they're actively deceiving. You can provoke this by using the chat box yourself on a side issue and see if they pick up on it. It can be a shared joke or any simple item of conversation. The most interest is likely to be shown by the bluffer. It's an easy trap to lay. The bluffer's nerves will likely make them respond quicker than the other players.

RESPONSES EXAGGERATED

Responses are always exaggerated when someone is lying. When you are fabricating a story (bluffing) the emphasis is almost always out of sync, unnatural. This again can betray itself online or socially. In a live game there are of course many more physical tell give-aways, such as temple rubbing, eyes looking down all the time as a child would when being told off.

Eye contact in a physical game is a powerful "tell" as some bluffers will over-engage when they are not being straightforward. We are back to the liar being unable to sync the correct or natural response to his words or gestures. Women are brilliant at unearthing deception and keeping their findings to themselves until it's tactically most devastating. One of the best online signals of deception is a change in betting patterns. A naturally aggressive player who becomes more passive post flop either has a premium hand and is luring you in or, if you've seen any of the above deception signs, is leading you to believe he has the "nuts" in an effort to convince you to fold. Compile the evidence as the hand unfolds and if you're the bluffer, take acting lessons.

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SERIOUSLY football

UEFA CUP: Sam boys storm in



ON ITS WAY: Stelios Giannakopoulos sees his shot blocked and Kevin Nolan (far left) pounces to fire in the rebound

NOLAN LEADS RAIN DANCE

KEVIN NOLAN'S sixth goal of the season gave the rain-drenched Reebok faithful something to sing about last night.

Bolton skipper Nolan struck in the 24th minute after a lofted free-kick from Bruno N'Gotty had found Stelios in a crowded six-yard box.

The Greek ace swivelled and shot but his effort was parried by Zenit goalkeeper Kamil Contofalsky, who must have thought the danger had gone.

But the ever-alert Nolan moved swiftly to blast the rebound home.

And that goal was enough to take Bolton above Zenit to the top of Group H to the delight of the 15,905-strong crowd.

Zenit's Czech coach Vlastimil Petrzel was forced to make wholesale changes from the team that gained an opening victory over Vitoria Guimares, the Portuguese club Bolton visit next in three weeks.

Suspension and injury problems left Petrzel fielding something of a makeshift side with influential skipper Vladislav Radimov missing after being sent off against Guimares. Half-a-dozen other first teamers were sidelined through injury.

Squander

In contrast, Bolton boss Sam Allardyce was able to field a near full-strength team and they made it count by exerting plenty of pressure on the Russians right from the world go.

And they could have been two goals up in a one-minute spell of attacking that saw striker Kevin Davies squander a couple of good scoring chances.

The first came in the 16th minute when Nolan raced down the left wing and finished his run by sending over a text-book cross deep into the Zenit penalty area.

The ball was inch-perfect and Davies just had to head it beyond Zenit keeper Contofalsky.

But he failed abysmally, putting his header a couple of feet wide to leave him and his team-mates shaking their heads in disbelief.

Just a few seconds later, Gary Speed produced a defence-splitting pass which Davies latched on to before firing high

by KEVIN FRANCIS

Bolton 1
Z St Petersburg 0

over the advancing Contofalsky and over the bar. But the St Petersburg side repeatedly posed problems with their quick-moving raids and almost caught Bolton cold with one first-half attack.

Skipper Andrey Arshavin burst through and looked set to score until Bolton keeper Just Jaaskelainen succeeded in blocking his effort after racing out to narrow the angle.

That kind of move from Zenit always created problems for Bolton and made their defence jittery.

Zenit came within a whisker of scoring in the 52nd minute when Egor Denisov jinked his way down the left wing before sending over a dangerous centre.

Alexander Kerzhakov ran in and did his best to control and direct the ball despite losing his balance. But his right-foot effort from a couple of yards went wide.

Bolton were again on the back foot in the 61st minute after Gorshkov broke forward but he wasted the chance.

Allardyce decided to shake things up in the 66th minute and introduced Jay-Jay Okocha for ineffective Hidetoshi Nakata.

Davies then got clear in the 67th minute but sent a header wide of the target following a long ball from Joey O'Brien.

But Jaaskelainen had to look lively to keep out a Zenit effort in the 79th minute and did even better in denying Arshavin right at the death.

TEAMS

BOLTON: Jaaskelainen, O'Brien, N'Gotty, Ben Haim, Gardner, Faye, Giannakopoulos, Nakata, Speed, Nolan, Davies. Subs: Walker, Jaidi, Borgetti, Okocha, Diouf, Yaz Te, Fojut.
ZENIT ST PETERSBURG: Contofalsky, Anjukov, Hagen, Skrtel, Flachbart, Vjestica, Sumnikoski, Vlasov, Denisov, Alexander Kerzhakov, Arshavin. Subs: Malafeev, Cadikovski, Gorshkov, Poskus, Korzhakov, Kezlov, Streev.
Referee: Matteo Trefontoni (Italy).



TOP MAN: Kevin Nolan celebrates his goal

while McClaren's goal aces add another three

BORO HITMEN ON THE MARK

MIDDLESBROUGH'S goal-hungry strikers are giving boss Steve McClaren the sort of problems every manager dreams about.

Just five days after Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink and Yakubu had terrorised Manchester United, it was the turn of Mark Viduka and the Nigerian to prove their partnership is deadly, too.

Viduka scored twice in six second-half minutes after Yakubu had opened the scoring, to leave Boro within a point of qualifying for the UEFA Cup knockout stages.

Viduka was a frustrated substitute last weekend but underlined his own goalscoring prowess with a breathtaking 50th-minute scorcher which clinched Boro's win and leaves them needing a draw against AZ Alkmaar in Holland to progress. His second was equally emphatic as he hammered home the rebound after keeper Artem Kusliy had saved James Morrison's shot.

Viduka has now scored five goals and Hasselbaink three this term but it is Yakubu who is leading the way.

McClaren's decision to splash the cash on the African is proving to be an inspired piece of business.

Expensive

The 22-year-old became the second most expensive player in Boro's history when they paid Portsmouth £7.5m for the striker during the summer.

But Yakubu has already paid off a big chunk of that fee with his predatory instincts offering Boro a fresh dimension.

He took his tally to seven in just 11 starts with a superbly-struck 36th-minute opener as Boro once again demonstrated their European pedigree.

Yakubu had already found the net six times in the Premiership and soon made his mark on his first UEFA Cup start for the club.

Picking up Emanuel Pogatzetz's left-wing throw-in, he cut inside, swapped passes with Gaizka Mendietta and then hammered a right-foot shot past Dnipro keeper Artem Kusliy.

Moments later he turned provider as Mendietta almost doubled Boro's lead.

His weighted pass allowed the in-form Spaniard to race from the corner flag without breaking stride to test the Dnipro keeper with a vicious left-foot effort.

The Spaniard once again relished his role in the middle of the park and caught the eye throughout.

As a unit, Boro could not quite match the standards they had set during last Saturday's 4-1 win over Manchester United and Dnipro were growing in confidence when Yakubu struck.

Stunning

There was a scare for Boro in the 20th minute when Chris Riggott came sliding in to clear in the nick of time after Dmytro Mykhaylenko and Dmytro Semochko had combined to carve open the home defence.

But it was Boro - and Mendietta in particular - who carried the greater threat early on.

Mendietta had ended an 18-month drought with a stunning double against United and looked in the mood for another goal feast.

On six minutes, he brilliantly anticipated a defensive clear-



YAK ATTACK: Yakubu wheels away after putting Boro ahead and (below) celebrates with Gaizka Mendietta

by IAN MURTAGH

Middlesbrough **3**
Dnipro **0**

ance to meet the dropping ball on the half-volley and sting Kusliy's hands with his shot.

And moments later, after being cleverly teed up by Yakubu, his right-foot drive flew inches wide, crashing into the advertising hoardings.

When Franck Queudrue's curling free-kick in the 12th minute narrowly missed the target after a foul on Mendietta, it seemed only a matter of time before Boro would break the deadlock but they lost their momentum until Yakubu struck.

The lack of atmosphere inside the Riverside didn't help their cause.

McClaren had blasted the stay-away fans who had missed the win over Xanthi in the previous round and must have expected a bigger attendance than last night's paltry 12,953 turn-out.

But neither Saturday's extravaganza nor chairman Steve Gibson's appeal for them to turn up for this one had swayed them and it was another disappointing crowd for a European night on Teesside.

It was a stroll for Boro after Viduka's double and Morrison almost notched a fourth only to be denied by a flying Kusliy save.

TEAMS

BORO: Schwarzer, Bates, Riggott, Queudrue, Parnaby, Mendietta, Doriva, Morrison, Pogatzetz, Viduka, Yakubu, Subs: Jones, Boateng, Kennedy, Nemeth, Johnson, Maccarone, Hasselbaink.
DNIPRO: Kusliy, Shershun, Radchenko, Shelaev, Yezersky, Rusol, Semochko, Rykun, Mikhaylenko, Nazarenko, Kostyshyn, Subs: Kemozenko, Motuz, Lisitski, Melaschenko, Kornilenko, Bidenko, Kravchenko.
REFEREE: Bertrand Layec (France).



Information Station

FOOTBALL

UEFA Cup Group D

Middlesbrough (1) 3 Dnipro (0) 0

Yakubu 36 Att: 12,953

Litke Lovetch (1) 2 Grasshoppers (0) 1

Middlesbrough P W D L F A Pts

AZ 2 2 0 0 4 6

Litke Lovetch 1 1 0 0 2 1 3

Grasshoppers 0 0 0 0 1 3 0

Dnipro 2 0 0 2 1 5 0

Group H

Bolton (1) 1 Z St Petersburg (0) 0

Nolan 24 Att: 15,905

Bolton P W D L F A Pts

Z St Petersburg 2 1 1 0 2 1 4

Besiktas 1 0 1 0 1 1 1

Sevilla 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Guimaraes 1 0 1 1 2 0 0

UEFA Cup Group A: Hamburg 2

Viking FK 0, St. Petersburg 4, CSKA Sofia

2. Group B: Brondby 2, Maccabi

Petach Tikva 0, Palermo 0, Lokomotiv

Moscow 0. Group C: Lens 5

Halmstad BK 0, Sampdoria 0, Steaua

Bucuresti 0. Group E: Crvena Zvezda

1. Basle 2, Strasbourg 2, Tromso 0.

Group F: Heerenveen 0, CSKA

Moscow 0, Levski Sofia 1, Dinamo

Bucuresti 0. Group G: Rapid Bucuresti

2. Rennes 0, VfB Stuttgart 0, Shakhtar

Donetsk 2.

BASKETBALL

BBL Championship: London

Towers 87, Westfield Sharks 73,

Scottish Rocks 86, Plymouth Raiders

80.

TENNIS

ATP PARIBAS MASTERS (Paris) -

3rd rd: N Davydenko (Rus) bt D

Tursunov (Rus) 3-6 6-2 6-3, T Robredo

(Spa) bt N Djokovic (Ser) 6-4 6-3, T

Berdych (Cze) bt JC Ferrero (Spa) 7-5

6-7 6-4, D Ferrer (Spa) bt T Haas (Ger)

6-2 6-7 6-3, I Ljubicic (Cro) bt T

Johansson (Swe) 6-3 7-6, R Stepanek

(Cze) bt P-H Mathieu (Fra) 7-5 6-4, A

Roddick (USA) bt D Hrbaty (Svk) 6-1 6-2

WTA ADVANTA CHAMPIONSHIPS

(Philadelphia) - 2nd rd: E Dementieva

(Rus) bt A Bachmann (Ger) 6-3 6-3, M

Sucha (Svk) bt A Haynes (USA) 6-3 6-1,

M Washington (USA) bt T Panova

(Rus) 7-6 6-3, N Vaidisova (Cze) bt

Koukalova (Cze) 4-6 6-1 6-4, N Petrova

(Rus) bt Y Shvedova (Rus) 6-2 6-2, A

Mauresmo (Fra) bt A Sugiyama (Jpn)

6-3 6-4, K Peschke (Cze) bt S

Karatancheva (Bul) 6-1 6-0.

TODAY'S DIARY

(Football 7.45pm unless stated)

FA Cup First Round

Cambridge City v Hereford

Merthyr v Walsall

Port Vale v Wrexham

Nationwide North: Leigh RMI v

Workop.

Welsh Cup - 3rd Rd: Port Talbot v

Bryntirion (7.30).

BASKETBALL

BBL Championship: Newcastle

Eagles v Plymouth Raiders.

CRICKET

First Test Match - day 2 of 5:

Australia v West Indies (Brisbane).

Fourth One Day International:

South Africa v New Zealand (Durban).

GOLF

USPGA Tour Championship (East

Lake GC, Atlanta).

MOTOR RACING

A1 Grand Prix of Nations Rd 4

practice (Sydney, Australia).

RUGBY UNION

Guinness Premiership (8pm):

Wasps v Bristol, Worcester v Leicester.

Celtic League (7.30): Cardiff Blues

v Munster, Glasgow v Connacht, Ulster

v Ospreys (7.10).

TENNIS

ATP Paribas Masters (Paris,

France).

WTA Advanta Championships

(Philadelphia, USA).

YESTERDAY'S SPORTWOOD

ACROSS: 1 Rag Trade, 7 Anglo, 8

Table, 9 Turner, 10 Hemi, 12 Ruby, 14

Dallas, 17 Clive, 18 Dowle, 19

Newlands. **DOWN:** 1 Roger, 2

Goosen, 3 Ruth, 4 Doble, 5 Catterick,

6 Le Tissier, 11 Hayden, 13 Brive, 15

Lewis, 16 Real.

5 FOR FUN

1 Paul Scholes, 2 Danny Murphy, 3

Lord's, 4 50, 5 Dawn Run.

Answers: Info Station



WHELAN: Transfer spree

Dave's vow to spend

WIGAN owner Dave Whelan has vowed to splash out in January to improve on Wigan's dream Premiership start. The Latics are flying high in second spot and face Portsmouth tomorrow looking to make it six wins out of six.

But Whelan insists Wigan will not rest – and revealed he plans to strengthen the squad.

Boss Paul Jewell is keen to add more attacking options and has earmarked Wycombe's Nathan Tyson as one of his first targets.

Recruit

Whelan said: "We will need to strengthen.

"Many teams who come up to the Premiership find themselves in a desperate situation come January and normally take desperate measures – not us.

"By January we should be nearer to our survival mark.

"But it all depends on who is available. We certainly won't buy for buying sake."

Striker Jason Roberts could start at Fratton Park after returning to training following a thigh injury.

Robert recall

by PETER WHITE

PORTSMOUTH boss Alain Perrin is confident there will be no more tantrums from Laurent Robert.

The sulky French winger will be a substitute against Wigan tomorrow after being heavily fined for refusing to be on the bench for last weekend's 4-1 win at Sunderland.

He later claimed he had a groin strain but has apologised for his behaviour.

Future

However, fit-again Robert will not go straight back into the first team.

Perrin said: "It would be extremely difficult to change the team.

"We played well, worked hard and scored four goals."

But he insists Robert still has a future at Fratton Park, adding: "There is no problem with him. I hope he will be with us at least for the rest of this season."

Defender Andy O'Brien (knee) and striker Lomana LuaLua, who is recovering from malaria, miss out.

SERIOUSLY football

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: Chelsea warned



WE'RE GUNNER PUT BITE ON BLUES

says ROBIN VAN PERSIE

JOSE MOURINHO has said Arsene Wenger is "a voyeur" – but Robin van Persie says it is Chelsea who should be keeping an eye Arsenal!

London's big two are at war off the field as the bosses' incredible row rumbles on. And Van Persie is convinced that the Blues' shock slump is not over yet.

Chelsea's wonderful winning start to the season had the bookies paying out on the title last month.

Flooded

But that gamble looks a bit dodgy now, after Mourinho's men drew in the league at Everton, were dumped out of the Carling Cup by Charlton and lost at Real Betis in the Champions League.

In that time, Arsenal powered through in the League Cup and rode into the last 16 of the Champions League.

And Van Persie believes his teammates are ready to bite into their rivals' 14-point Premiership lead – because hope has finally flooded back into the Highbury dressing-room.

The Dutch ace, who bagged a brace in the 3-0 win against Sparta Prague, said: "Everyone's saying, 'Chelsea this, Chelsea that', but so what?"

"We are fighting for the Premier League and it's my dream to win it."

"Chelsea have a good squad but so have we and we'll fight for it."

"I see every match in Europe and I have been watching Chelsea lose recently. That gives us all hope."

Van Persie also has his sights on succeeding Dennis Bergkamp as a legend at Arsenal. But Bergkamp disagrees with

his fellow Dutchman over the Gunners' chances of taking on Chelsea in the Premiership this season.

Bergkamp even goes as far as claiming the Gunners can no longer claim to be among the best teams in Europe.

Wenger's side have never been past the last eight in the Champions League, despite enormous domestic success.

And Bergkamp said: "We're doing well in Europe but I wouldn't say we're up there with the top teams."

"I don't know about winning the competition. We shouldn't close our eyes to the fact that teams we've beaten in our group aren't the biggest."

"There are a lot of big teams in other groups who we'll meet, so we'll only see then if we're a good team."

"The league is the main target but the Champions League is special because I haven't won it yet."

Holisting aloft the Champions League trophy in Paris on May 17 would be a fitting way for Bergkamp, 36, to bring down the curtain on his glittering career.

Claim

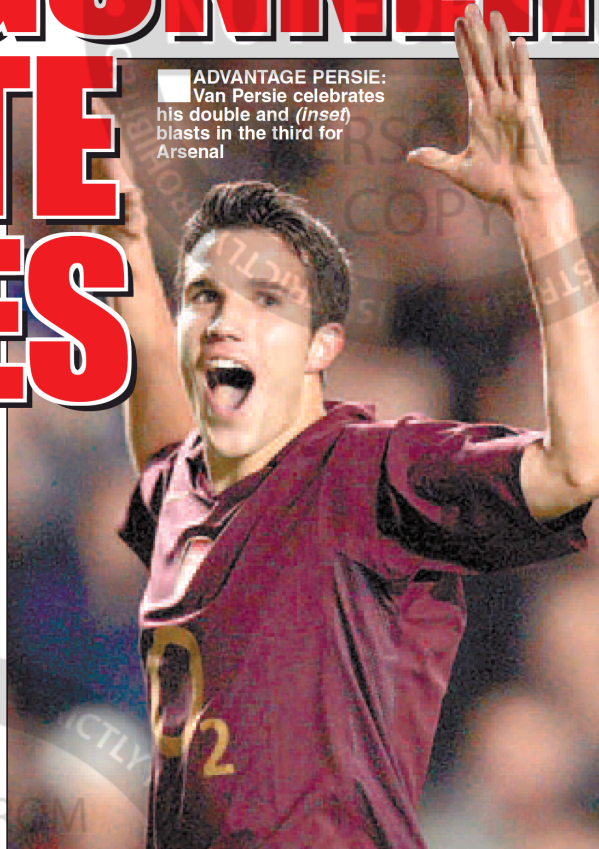
The veteran striker is out of contract at the end of the season and could move on from north London or retire altogether from the sport.

But Bergkamp has backed Van Persie to be his successor.

The 22-year-old has fired four goals in three games to stake his claim for a place in the starting line-up against Sunderland tomorrow.

And Bergkamp said: "Robin can score goals and is confident, which is fantastic for the future."

ADVANTAGE PERSIE: Van Persie celebrates his double and (inset) blasts in the third for Arsenal



GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ARSENAL	4	4	0	0	9	2	12
Ajax	4	2	1	1	8	5	7
FC Thun	4	1	0	3	4	8	3
Sparta Prague	4	0	1	3	1	7	1

Remaining fixtures:

November 22: Ajax v Sparta Prague, FC Thun v Arsenal.
December 7: Sparta Prague v FC Thun, Arsenal v Ajax.



AGGER: Target

Rafa to have Agger-do

by CHRIS HARPER

LIVERPOOL are ready to launch another bid for Danish defender Daniel Agger.

The European champions will move again for the highly-rated 20-year-old Brondby ace when the transfer window opens in January.

Anfield boss Rafael Benitez had Agger among his top targets in August but was unable to agree a deal with Brondby.

Brondby coach Michael

Laudrup insists that they do not want to sell and will demand over £5m for his services.

But that is unlikely to deter Benitez, who said: "We've made two mistakes by not signing a right midfielder and a centre-back."

"We had a lot of names in the summer but they all proved difficult. I'm confident it will be different in

January." The Liverpool boss is also continuing his search for a right-winger but said skipper Steven Gerrard was prepared to play there until he got his man.

Meanwhile, Anderlecht striker Nenad Jestrovic will fight any UEFA investigation into his sending-off for alleged racist abuse of Liverpool's Mohamed Sissoko.

The 29-year-old was sent off in his side's 3-0 defeat at Anfield on Tuesday after a

verbal clash with the Mali midfielder. But the Serbia star said: "What Sissoko has been saying is not what he said after the game."

"I have video evidence that will show him abusing me. I will meet my lawyers and discuss the options. But I intend to go all the way to clear my name. I have done nothing wrong."

EVERTON have made a record profit of £23.5m, cutting their debt to £28m.

SOCCER LINES

READING boss Steve Coppell has been named Coca-Cola Championship Manager of the Month for October after guiding the Royals to four wins and two draws. Barnsley's Andy Ritchie and Leyton Orient's Martin Ling won the respective awards for Coca-Cola Leagues One and Two.

BRISTOL ROVERS want Grimsby boss Russell Slade to take over from sacked Ian Atkins. The clubs meet in the FA Cup tomorrow.

SOUTHAMPTON face a tough fight to hold on to Theo Walcott, with Juventus joining Chelsea in the race to sign the £5m-rated 16-year-old.

DAVID SOMMEIL has been ruled out for at least six weeks after fracturing a cheekbone in Manchester City's win over Aston Villa.

COVENTRY chairman Mike McGinnity has resigned because of ill health.

GOALKEEPER Paddy Kenny is close to agreeing a new contract with Sheffield United that will make him one of their highest-paid players. Meanwhile, Blades ace Ian Ross, 19, has extended his loan spell at Boston for a second month.

MARK HUGHES has handed Norwegian Karim Aoudia the chance to seal a permanent deal at Blackburn. Aoudia, 19, impressed during a pre-season trial and Hughes is now in talks with Oslo Ost to sign the striker.

FENERBAHCE'S Nicolas Anelka has earned a surprise recall by France for friendlies against Costa Rica and Germany.

HULL have told David Johnson to forget about a move to the KC Stadium after the Nottingham Forest striker refused to take a drop in wages.

WEST BROM have been given planning permission for a £1m extension to their training ground facilities.

SHEFFIELD Wednesday boss Paul Sturrock is ready to abandon his hunt for a striker after bids for Nathan Tyson and Lee Trundle were rejected.

FORMER Crystal Palace keeper Lance Cronin, 20, has signed non-contract forms with Oldham and goes straight into the squad for Sunday's FA Cup first-round tie against Non-League Chasetown.

CHAMPIONSHIP leaders Sheffield United have been forced to cancel a sunshine break to Malta – because their hotel is full of builders!

IT'S A DANNY OLD GAME

Read Chief Football Writer Danny



Fullbrook every Friday

Frank's left Rio light years behind

RIO FERDINAND and Frank Lampard began their careers together – but they look odds-on to end their playing days poles apart.

Born just a few months apart in 1978, the pair grew up as close friends at West Ham's academy.

Nurtured by former boss Harry Redknapp and Frank Lampard Snr, the pair were the pick of the crop from a golden generation of Hammers players who emerged in the East End.

But the duo, who come face to face on Sunday in what is promising to be a tear-up at Old Trafford, are in for starkly different futures.

While one was hailed as the best player in the world by his manager last weekend and recently picked by Real Madrid supporters as the star they most wanted to buy, the other is facing the chop for club and country.

Looking back at the expectancy levels around them when they were teenagers, you would have expected Ferdinand to be winning all the plaudits, as he was widely considered to be the most natural English defender since the late, great Bobby Moore.

Mature

Critics said 'Fat Frank' Lampard only made it because of his dad and his uncle Harry.

But since they were both sold by the Hammers to help build a new stand, it is Lampard who is deservedly on his way to being recognised among the game's elite.

Voted Footballer of the Year last season, where he produced an acceptance speech which highlighted his mature nature and understanding of the game, he is a good bet for European Footballer of the Year.

He has helped Chelsea to their first title in 50 years and scored the goals which have taken England to the World Cup finals in Germany next summer.

United defender Ferdinand had the whole world at his feet when he left Upton Park for Leeds

in a staggering £18m deal in November 2000.

As David O'Leary's side disintegrated, he found the perfect escape route with an even more astonishing £30m move to Old Trafford as the world's most expensive defender.

That was on the back of a series of brilliant performances in the 2002 World Cup in Japan.

But once he realised he had made it, the lights went off in Rio's world and he hit cruise control.

Hunger

By comparison, Lampard has retained his hunger, desire and drive since his £11m move to Chelsea in June 2001.

Lampard's whole life has been about improvement and wanting to be the best.

At the moment there is only one direction for Ferdinand – down. I wonder what Sir Alex

IS Danny right about Rio Ferdinand? Let him know your views. Text DSDANNY followed by a space then your views to 61616. Texts cost 25p plus normal operator rate. Or send him an e-mail to danny.fullbrook@dailystar.co.uk



FRIENDS REUNITED: Rio Ferdinand and Frank Lampard training with England

Ferguson would give to have bought Lampard instead of Ferdinand.

But, to be brutally honest, Ferguson's judgement has generally been flawed in the last five years.

When Roy Keane was busy criticising his teammates in the most famous interview never shown, he stopped short of hitting out at his manager.

But it was implied criticism. The reason Darren Fletcher, Alan Smith, John

O'Shea and Ferdinand are not performing is down to the manager.

So many of his buys have been so mediocre and he seems no longer capable of motivating them.

Hailed

Some United fans may say Keane is part of the problem.

But at least when he is on the pitch he always gives his best. He also knows when it is time to call it a day – unlike his manager.

WENG FOR ME

MANY fans will be revelling in the Jose Mourinho-Arsene Wenger feud. It is brilliant entertainment and I don't know why the FA or League Managers' Association want them to stop.

But if you are a neutral wondering who to back, remember this: Wenger has been a breath of fresh air to the Premiership and created probably the best footballing team this country has seen when Arsenal went a season unbeaten.

He has always retained his composure and politeness and never shirked an issue. I wish the same could be said about Mourinho.

SERIOUSLY
football

OLD TRAFFORD CRISIS: Van Nistelrooy vows to

United need answers... and quick

THERE are more questions than answers inside Old Trafford. Big, worrying questions.

Sir Alex Ferguson didn't look like someone who has the solutions after Manchester United's dismal Champions League capitulation against Lille on Wednesday night.

The manager was flat, almost resigned – a mood that should concern all fans who have seen their club slide into becoming just another ordinary Premiership side.

Fergie failed to inspire or lift his players and then couldn't change tactics when things began to go wrong. The Red Devil today is not well. United are a side who lack leadership on and off the pitch.

Fergie's role, indeed his future, is at the pinnacle of all the questions that need to be asked this morning as United prepare for Sunday's titanic battle with champions Chelsea – the club who threaten their existence as the biggest in England and one of the most powerful in the world.

Worthy

Fergie has spent heavily, desperately trying to create another era at the Theatre of Dreams. The squad he has put together is not good enough.

Half of the side who lost to Lille are not worthy of wearing the red of United. John O'Shea, Wes Brown, Alan Smith, Darren Fletcher and Kieron Richardson ... these are not the kind of players that set the heart beating, men who have made generations of supporters proud.

These are not trophy-winning heroes. The saddest thing to witness in Paris was the lack of passion and pride. They know they are struggling and yet the sleeves were not rolled up, there was no fist-waving at each other when mistakes were made.

That, I'm afraid has to be down to Fergie. Clearly, he is running out of time and a football club is still looking to him to somehow lead them out of this mess.

He is not getting any help from his players and that is the image of too many footballers today.

Too many take the money and let others shoulder the responsibility when things go wrong.

It is why Rio Ferdinand gets so much criticism. His £120,000-a-week salary should guarantee him sweating blood for the cause. He's playing as if he doesn't care.

If you were picking a World Cup squad today, Ferdinand would not be in it, such has been his fall from grace.

Where on Wednesday was the player who wanted to lead by example? Where was the player who went around lifting morale? No Roy Keane, no passion.

Ferdinand was not a bad buy but there have been others that Fergie has wasted money on. Yes, he can point to injuries, yet no big club should hide behind losing players. Not in today's financial climate.

What United have underneath their strongest side are too many ordinary footballers on too much money.

So, what will owner American businessman Malcolm Glazer make of everything? Who knows? His shameful handling of owning a club like this is part of the problem.

United are a club without a figure-

WOOLY'S
VERDICT

head. Fergie has never needed a shoulder to cry on more than now. He can't go to chief executive David Gill because he has no power.

Has Glazer bought a pup, if he understands the phrase? No, but what he has bought is a club that has been allowed to drift into decline. His plan will be to make huge amounts of money from United, but without a successful first team he has no chance.

With repayment of the debt he has inflicted on the club soon to kick in, there seem no real funds to strengthen the side. No money to buy the kind of players needed to put United back to where they belong, up around the top of the Premiership and firing on all cylinders.

At the moment they are breaking down, a model with too many miles on the clock and so far behind Chelsea. Owner Roman Abramovich and manager Jose Mourinho have simply exposed the problems that have been coming at Manchester United.

Chelsea have hurried them into the forefront and there is nothing United can do about what's happening in West London.

They can do something about their own decline. But what? A new manager? At the moment they look like a club in need of a fresh start, there is no spark about them.

Many times I have said that Fergie should have quit when he announced that decision a couple of seasons ago and this, surely, is his last in control.

Critical

His partnership with No.2 Carlos Queiroz is not working and not producing results. United will argue they have only lost a couple of games in this critical season, but that's not the issue here.

It is the realisation United are coming to the end of a golden era. Yes, things go around in circles and maybe this is Chelsea's time. United must go down fighting instead of the inept performance shown against Middlesbrough and Lille.

So many questions unanswered. Fergie's future and whether he still has it in him to lead this giant; some players who clearly believe they are better than they are and cushioned by fat contracts; Glazer, and what's next from him.

Then there is Keane, who exposed the crisis with his rant on MUTV which the club banned – a personal attack on some of the players he clearly holds in contempt.

What does Fergie do with his captain, a player he has always supported and someone the supporters made clear in Paris they still want?

At the moment United don't look to have any solutions. Everyone is asking where they are going and no-one inside Old Trafford knows. Some will gloat but this is a sad football story.

BRIAN WOOLNOUGH



BLEAK HOUSE:
Ruud Van Nistelrooy says it's the most difficult time since he joined United



by BILL THORNTON

RUUD VAN NISTELROOY has admitted the magic has gone from Manchester United – and the £19m striker is desperately worried how they are going to get it back.

He said: "When I came to the club four years ago United were almost unbeatable.

"Now, this is the most difficult period since I arrived here. We are simply not playing well. I think confidence is a bit down."

United are floundering in the Premiership, 13 points adrift of Chelsea, and face a struggle to qualify for the Champions League's last-16 knockout stage.

Manager Sir Alex Ferguson has given coach Carlos Queiroz licence to reamp the team's style to a more cautious, continental approach.

Not only have the results dipped over the past two seasons but so have performance levels.

And Van Nistelrooy seemed to reflect a growing resentment within the dressing-room when he said: "The situation is different from when I came to the club.

"I remember getting four and five opportunities in a match, constant service and constant attack. Then it was great. I enjoyed that!

"Now, it's changed. I have to give it my all but in a different situation. We have difficulty keeping the ball.

"It's not moving fluently from player to player and we don't have a flow of attacks. We don't play in the opposition half, with crosses coming in and pressure created.

"The big question is, how are we going to get those good times back? That is the thing. How are we going to do that?"

Plea

Van Nistelrooy seemed to be making an indirect plea to Ferguson and Queiroz to take the shackles off and allow United to try to reproduce the free-flowing style that made them not only so successful but also so exciting.

The team faces make-or-break clashes with Chelsea on Sunday and in the Champions League against Villarreal. And the Van Man claimed: "After the defeat to Lille the fact is that we have to win at home against Villarreal.

"Sometimes, we hold back but now the situation is simple. We can only go for it."

Despite his frustration – and endless rumours that he is set to quit the club – Van Nistelrooy declared his loyalty.

He said: "I committed myself to the club back then and now, in the bad times, I just want to give it my best,

Roy's right to slag us off

From Back Page

important that we keep doing that – keep caring." Van Nistelrooy, stand-inskipper when United crashed to Champions League defeat against Lille in midweek, went across to the furious fans at the end and held open his arms in a gesture of despair and apology.

Keane had spoken out – only to be gagged – after United's shocking 4-1 defeat at Middlesbrough on Saturday.

Van Nistelrooy said: "Things are being said and written about us. All we must do is think about our game. When you are criticised you

can be angered but, also, you can look inside yourself and think about it. You can wonder if it is true."

Van Nistelrooy, though not a bosom buddy of Keane, made it clear that he has no complaint.

Backing

He added: "Players must ask themselves if they can take something from criticism that will help the situation."

Keane, for so long a contender to succeed Ferguson, has often had his boss's backing when criticising the team in the past. This

time it looked as though the Irishman, out with a broken foot, may have burned his boats by singling out individuals with comments which appeared to upset Ferguson and chief executive David Gill.

But Ferguson's actions show he was more than happy to use Keane's controversial observations to motivate his men ahead of the must-win Chelsea match.

Keane has earned a place in the hearts of United fans, 10,000 of whom roared their backing for him in the Stade de France on Wednesday.

stay and fight to put an end to the slump

DON'T KNOW HOW WE'LL GET GOOD TIMES BACK

GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Villarreal	4	1	3	0	2	1	6
Lille	4	1	2	1	1	1	5
MAN UNITED ..	4	1	2	1	2	2	5
Benfica	4	1	1	2	3	4	4

Remaining fixtures - Nov 22: Lille v Benfica, Man United v Villarreal, Dec 7: Benfica v Man United, Villarreal v Lille.

like I did against Lille.

"I want to get United back to where we all want to see the club. I am not going anywhere.

"When I ran over to the fans in Paris I wanted to show them that I share their pain. That I am part of that and that I am willing to give my all to turn things around. After my injury problems last season my target was to get back on track. I think I've done that."

Van Nistelrooy, who accepted United's squad is nowhere near as strong as Chelsea's - "but, then, nobody else's is" - claimed that the flak has "made the players bond together more".

But he also admitted: "We have to look at the squad and at individuals. We have to look at everything. Each of us knows within himself what has to happen."

Blasted

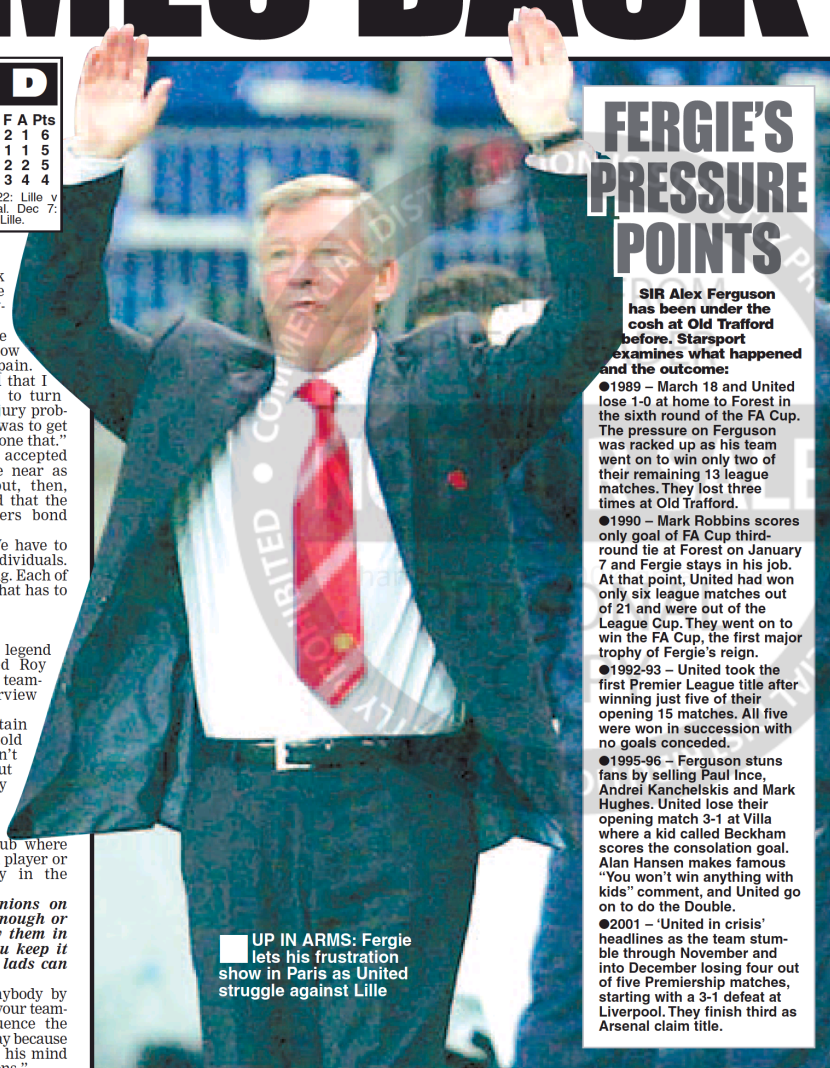
Meanwhile, Old Trafford legend Bryan Robson has blasted Roy Keane's decision to slate his teammates in the MUTV interview that was never shown.

The former United captain and West Brom boss told www.nobok.com: "I don't think Roy's comments about his team has helped anybody within the club."

"You always say 'If you've got something to say and you're within a football club where you're a manager, a football player or a captain, it should stay in the dressing-room'.

"And if you've got opinions on who you think are good enough or not good enough, you say them in the dressing-room and you keep it within yourself. Then the lads can respond to it."

"I don't think it helps anybody by going public and criticising your teammates. Nor will that influence the manager's decision in one way because the manager will still make his mind up and make his own decisions."



UP IN ARMS: Fergie lets his frustration show in Paris as United struggle against Lille

FERGIE'S PRESSURE POINTS

SIR Alex Ferguson has been under the cosh at Old Trafford before. Starsport examines what happened and the outcome:

●1989 - March 18 and United lose 1-0 at home to Forest in the sixth round of the FA Cup. The pressure on Ferguson was racked up as his team went on to win only two of their remaining 13 league matches. They lost three times at Old Trafford.

●1990 - Mark Robins scores only goal of FA Cup third-round tie at Forest on January 7 and Fergie stays in his job. At that point, United had won only six league matches out of 21 and were out of the League Cup. They went on to win the FA Cup, the first major trophy of Fergie's reign.

●1992-93 - United took the first Premier League title after winning just five of their opening 15 matches. All five were won in succession with no goals conceded.

●1995-96 - Ferguson stuns fans by selling Paul Ince, Andrei Kanchelskis and Mark Hughes. United lose their opening match 3-1 at Villa where a kid called Beckham scores the consolation goal. Alan Hansen makes famous "You won't win anything with kids" comment, and United go on to do the Double.

●2001 - 'United in crisis' headlines as the team stumble through November and into December losing four out of five Premiership matches, starting with a 3-1 defeat at Liverpool. They finish third as Arsenal claim title.

Mystery illness KO's Dyer

by IAN MURTAGH

NEWCASTLE are refusing to reveal the medical condition that has stalled Kieron Dyer's career yet again. The injury-plagued Newcastle midfielder, who has been troubled by hamstring problems for the past six months, broke down in training this week with a recurrence of his long-standing complaint.

But it emerged yesterday that the England international has a complex muscular condition which is neither football nor lifestyle-related.

And the medication needed to treat it is hampering his bid to regain full fitness. Newcastle issued a statement revealing that the unlucky 26-year-old has suffered another setback which was linked to a medical problem.

However, the club refused to divulge either the nature or the seriousness of the condition.

It said: "Kieron Dyer has a medical problem which has contributed to his lack of fitness."

Concerns

"Unfortunately, he has suffered another reaction following his appearance last weekend and will require further specialist attention to help him regain his full fitness."

It's understood Dyer's illness means he must take prescribed medication on a regular basis even if it stretches his recovery from the hamstring and back problems which have hindered his career.

The treatment could even make him more susceptible to further breakdowns. Now there are genuine concerns about one of the most talented midfielders in English football.

Dyer joined Newcastle from Ipswich for £6.5m in 1999 when Ruud Gullit was in charge but has yet to notch up 150 starts and only once has he played more than 40 games in a season. Ironically, Toon



DYER: Broke down

boss Graeme Souness was hopeful that Dyer's injury problems were behind him.

He played a fine cameo role in Newcastle's 3-0 win at West Brom last Sunday, laying on a Michael Owen goal with an impressive turn of pace.

Only last week, Souness said: "Kieron has sought other opinions on his injury. We have done everything we feel we can do on him and believe we have got to the bottom of it."

"We have got involved with his back and nerves and we have tried to do exercises and manipulation."

KISS AND MAKE UP

From Back Page

Wenger does it at the same time. Mourinho has been annoyed by what he sees as Wenger trying to destabilise Chelsea.

But he was slightly conciliatory yesterday. Ahead of the huge clash against Manchester United on Sunday, he said: "If the apology is at the same time, if he's ready to apologise from Highbury about the quotes and quotes and quotes and quotes, I'm ready to do the same."

"Of course it's not a personal thing. Of course the intention was not to hurt the man, the human being. "Yes I have respect for him, as a man and a football manager."

Asked if he respected him as much as Sir Alex Ferguson, he added: "It's different, but respect I have, for the human being because he's a successful

man. Nobody helped him to arrive where he arrived. I have to respect that. As a manager it's the same."

"He did very good things but I think there have been too many quotes about Chelsea."

"Some hurt, like the one about the moral leadership. Some funny like 'I only won one Premiership, but how can I win two in one year?'"

"I think it is enough. That would be good for me and good for him."

"I have problems to solve in my club because we lost a game and want to do better."

"He has problems to solve at his club because they are not doing as well as they want to do in the Premiership. It is better for us both to work on that and forget this."

FRANK-LY SPEAKING: Page 42



Let's kiss and make up, Jose tells Wenger

by DANNY FULLBROOK

JOSE MOURINHO is ready to call a ceasefire on his spat with Arsene Wenger. The Chelsea boss is adamant he meant nothing personal in his "sick voyeur" jibe towards the Arsenal boss.

Wenger has threatened legal action over the comments, claiming Mourinho was "disrespectful" and "disconnected with reality".

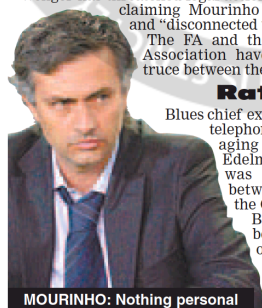
The FA and the League Managers Association have both called for a truce between the warring bosses.

Rattled

Blues chief executive Peter Kenyon telephoned Highbury's managing director Keith Edelman to insist there was nothing personal between Mourinho and the Gunners manager.

Both managers have been rattled by each others' comments, but Mourinho is only prepared to say sorry if

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MOURINHO: Nothing personal

RUUD: KEANO WAS RIGHT

And Fergie makes his flops watch Roy's rant

RUUD VAN NISTELROOY has backed captain Roy Keane over his attack on Manchester United's flops.

Keane is furious because the club censored his outspoken comments on their own TV station on Monday.

But striker Van Nistelrooy doesn't have a problem with Keane's outburst – and boss Sir Alex Ferguson yesterday forced his under-achievers to sit through the whole video nasty. The under-pressure United boss was determined to clear the air ahead of Sunday's crunch Premiership clash with Chelsea.

And he said: "Here's the video, here's what

by BILL THORNTON and HARRY HARRIS

Roy has said. See it for yourself and accept it." Keane also spoke privately to all the players to explain why he had made the comments about five individuals who would have been hurt by his outburst.

He slammed Darren Fletcher, Alan Smith, John O'Shea, Liam Miller and Kieran Richardson.

But Van Nistelrooy said: "I think it is good to have people who say what they feel because they care about the club. It is

Turn to Page 78

I'M SO SORRY:
Ruud van Nistelrooy apologises to fans after United's loss to Lille in midweek



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